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**GOING GREEN: SUSTAINABLE MINING, WATER, AND THE REMAKING
OF SOCIAL PROTEST IN POST-NEOLIBERAL ECUADOR**

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by

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Dedication

For Paloma, Nicolas, & Diego and all of the *Defensora/os de la vida*.

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GOING GREEN: SUSTAINABLE MINING, WATER, AND THE REMAKING OF SOCIAL PROTEST IN POST-NEOLIBERAL ECUADOR

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This dissertation examines the reconfiguration of popular environmental politics in the context of so-called sustainable mining development in Ecuador. Progressive governments in Latin America herald sustainable mining initiatives as the lynchpin to development capable of generating revenues to finance social welfare programs and protecting the environment. If this is so, my dissertation asks, then why has a proposed sustainable gold mine provoked such bitter opposition from dairy farmers in the parish of Victoria del Portete? My dissertation follows a group of indigenous and *mestizo* dairy farmers in the southern Ecuadorian Andes to understand why they oppose gold mining in their watershed and traces the cultural and political transformations that followed from their activism.

I make four key arguments in this dissertation. First, I argue that sustainable mining plans place a premium on local water resources and have the effect of rearticulating local water disputes. Whereas owners of small and large dairy farms have historically disputed local access to water resources now they have created a unified movement against the proposed gold mine project. Second, I argue that knowledge practices and political discourses enabled farmers with varying claims to ethnic ancestry and socio-economic standing to establish connections with each other and with national indigenous leaders, Catholic priests, artists, and urban ecologists. Together they have formed a movement in defense of life. My analysis extends common understandings of the nature of human agency and political life by examining the role that non-human

entities play in shaping contemporary environmental politics. Third, as a result of the mobilizations, new socio-environmental formations have emerged. The watershed has become a sacred place called *Kimsacocha*, which is venerated by farmers through new cultural practices as the source of life. Finally, the mobilizations in defense of life have re-centered indigeneity in unexpected ways. Farmers with and without indigenous ancestry as well as their urban allies are now claiming an indigenous identity. Unlike previous understandings of identity in the region, indigeneity does not denote a shared racial, cultural, or class position but refers to a particular way of understanding and relation to the environment.

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ACRONYMS

CONAIE- The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador

CONFENIAE-Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon

ECUARUNARI-Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui (a highland indigenous organization)

FOA-Federation of Indigenous and Campesinos of Azuay

FEINE-Council of Evangelical Peoples and Indigenous Organizations

FENOCIN-the Confederation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Black Organizations

FISCH- Inter-provincial Federation of Independent Shuar Centers

FRESMIGE-Resistance Front Against Large-Scale Mining

UNAGUA-Unified Community Water Systems of Azuay

UAM-Environmental Management Unit (within the Ministry of Energy and Mines).

Introduction

“...Our north is the South. There must not be north, for us, except in opposition to our South. Therefore we now turn the map upside down, and then we have a true idea of our position, and not as the rest of the world wishes. The point of America, from now on, forever, insistently points to the South, our north. —Joaquín Torres García.

Torres García's ink-drawn image of *América Invertida* or an Inverted America repositions the *Américas* from the Southern Hemisphere down [See figure 1]. The inversion is not simply a transformation in spatial orientation; it is a critique of North American hegemony as a cultural referent and driver of political-economic relations. In Ecuador, I first saw a map that simulated the *America Invertida* image as a poster or a rallying image more precisely against the signing of a Free Trade Agreement with the United States (TLC, by its Spanish acronym) in 2006. The image tapped into nationalist and regionalist sentiments for decolonization that were sweeping the nation, uniting diverse social and political movements. TLC marches and road-blockades convened popular and middle-class Ecuadorians to rally for the creation of “a sovereign and free” Ecuador (Acosta et al. 2006). They laid the political groundwork for the election of Rafael Correa to the Presidency on an anti-neoliberal platform. In a book published on the TLC, Correa argued that the most pressing crisis in Latin America was “a crisis of leaders and true statesmen,” (Correa 2006: 25). In the same year the book was published,

Correa was elected as President to lead what he called the Socialism of the 21st Century or the Citizen's Revolution. He joined Evo Morales and Hugo Chavez as part of Latin America's turn to the left. His election was widely heralded as a progressive victory that would pave the way to far reaching social transformation

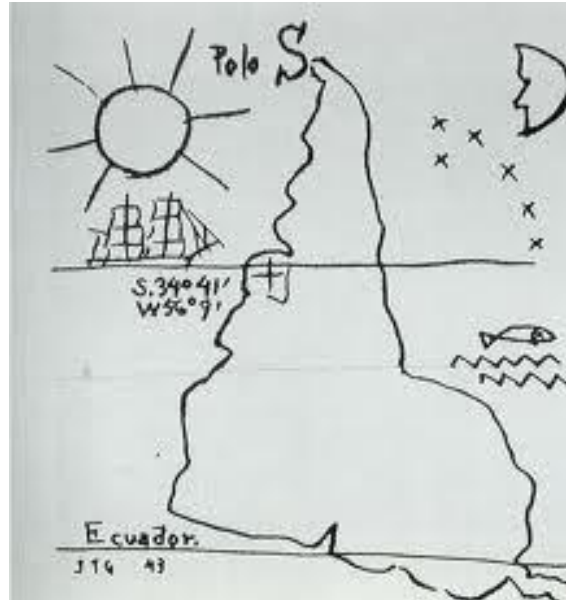


Figure 1: América Invertida. Joaquín Torres García.

In 2009, two years after elections, the Correa administration published and distributed a popular comic that extolled the virtues of a contentious mineral law approved by his government. The comic was a response to a movement of farmers—indigenous, mestizo, and some Afro-Ecuadorians—and their allies who staged massive street blockades, marches, and a hunger strike against the law, for fear that mining extraction would put at risk farmer lands and watersheds. The comic opened with an angry, presumably *gringo* CEO upset that the Ecuadorian Assembly passed mineral

legislation that was deemed unfavorable to multinational corporations. In an attempt to seek revenge against the government, the *gringo* sends out his lackeys to get environmentalists and indigenous leaders to protest the law. The comic represented the coalition of farmers—the people that elected Correa into office and called for social transformation—as working in the interests of foreign companies who did not want to see Ecuador establish a state-managed mining industry. It dismissed their claims for resource rights and reduced their activism into a narrative of political manipulation that threatened the very existence of national sovereignty. The comic represents the tensions and complexities over the building of an Ecuador *Invertido*, whereby social movements and multinational corporations are equally vilified by the revolutionary state government (Ospina 2009). In this context, political binaries between left and right, good and bad, become inadequate categories for analyzing state and social movement relations.

I conducted thirty months of fieldwork among dairy farmers from Victoria del Portete and Tarqui—two rural parishes outside of the city of Cuenca between 2008-2010.¹ This was a time when the Citizen's Revolution emerged as a contradictory political project that radically transformed the relations between state, social movements, and mining corporations. On the one hand, Correa's administration delivered an unprecedented set of economic and social reforms that benefited the country's poorest sectors. Among the first and most visible changes under the Correa administration was the audit of businesses and their forcible closure if they had not paid their taxes. On the

¹ A parish refers to a civil parish, which is the smallest administrative unit in Ecuador. Parishes make up a canton (in the US referred to as a county). In this case, the parishes of Victoria del Portete and Tarqui belong to the canton of Cuenca. Cuenca is a city and a canton within the province of Azuay.

streets, it was common to see buildings with a large red and blue sticker on them, with the words *Clausurado SRI* [Closed IRS] written across their tightly shut doors. Much of these revenues, combined with increased oil revenues from newly renegotiated contracts with petroleum companies, were invested in social welfare programs. The government raised the minimum salary, built new houses for the poorest, increased the welfare stipend called the *bono solidario*, provided free education and healthcare, paved new roads, and expanded the *Alimentate Ecuador* free food program.

On the other hand, and simultaneous to these dramatic reforms that were welcome to popular movements, came policies they had not anticipated and that were much more difficult to embrace. The Correa administration sought to expand, oil, timber, and mining activities, as well as build new hydroelectric dams and dredge important rivers to expand commerce and take advantage of soaring resource commodity prices. Over the course of my fieldwork, I watched territorial disputes over resource rights among indigenous, afro-Ecuadorian and mestizo communities and the state erupt, multiply, and intensify during the duration of my fieldwork. The majority of resource-related disputes centered on the creation of a large-scale metal mining industry.

This dissertation examines the rise of new popular environmental struggles alongside the consolidation of the Citizen's Revolution and an aggressive effort to jumpstart a large-scale sustainable mining industry in the country. Sustainable mining is heralded by neoliberal and post-neoliberal governments as a panacea to poverty alleviation while protecting the environment. In Ecuador, the government seeks to raise revenues from sustainable mineral extraction to finance popular social welfare programs,

an approach that Eduardo Gudynas calls ‘progressive extractivism,’ (Gudynas 2009). If promises of material benefits follow from sustainable gold mining, my dissertation asks, then why have the initiatives provoked such bitter opposition from a diverse set of farmers? My dissertation follows a heterogeneous group of dairy farmers, with varying claims to ethnic ancestry and social positioning as they create an opposition movement against a proposed gold mine project in the high altitude wetlands of Quimsacocha. I trace the cultural and political transformations that followed from their activism.

As I tracked farmers’ opposition to gold mining in Quimsacocha and their participation in national debates over new mining legislation, I was also interested in examining how power works under progressive extractivism, and how new forms of governance have reorganized the possibilities for collective political agency. More than just a case study of one mining conflict, this dissertation is best described as an ethnographic account of public contestations over mining extraction. Constitutional and legislative changes were crucial to put into practice progressive extractivism. I analyze how the dairy farmers organize themselves and generate alliances to collectively contest and transform these laws into ways that protect their watersheds and lands from the hazards of mining development. In legislative debates, watersheds, mountains, and rivers became rallying points for the diverse set of movements to coalesce around. These contestations were as much about protecting the landscapes from mining extraction, as they were about the meaning and practices of the development, racial politics, rights, livelihoods, and nation-building under post neoliberal political moment. Post-neoliberalism can be defined as a “hybrid state formation that has mounted certain

challenges to the neoliberal paradigm but which remains subject to the internal and external constraints of global capitalism,” (Fernandes 2010: 23, cited in Fabricant and Gustafson 2011).

Debates over the future of mineral extraction—disputed on the terrain of the environment and nationalism—reconfigure the state, corporate, and social movement relations in unexpected ways. To illustrate these new arrangements, I examine corporations, the state, and social movements as a set of connections instantiated through discursive regimes and material practices that organize disputes over mining development. Since dairy farmers and their allies were my primary collaborators, I spent the most time examining how grassroots environmental movement takes shape in the absence of overt identity-based demands that characterized Ecuadorian resource movements in the 1990s. To do this, I followed dairy farmers as they mobilized scientific and legal knowledge; religious practices; and popular memory to protect their watershed from mining extraction. I argue that engagement with a diverse set of knowledge systems helped generate broad based alliances, transformed their watershed from a potential mineral site into a symbol of life; and created new indigenous subjectivities while empowering campesina women as political agents in the course of mining debates. I also show how connections with indigenous organizations, enabled dairy farmers to move beyond a localized anti-mining movement, and to participate in the formation of a nation-wide coalition for the creation of a plurinational state where sustainable forms of development are resignified through indigenous discourses of the Pachamama [Mother Earth, in Andean parlance] and Sumak Kawsay [Living Well].

Another set of related arguments are focused on the state. Like social movements, the 'state' is not only a vertical exercise of power by the Correa administration, even though this is how it is commonly imaged, but works horizontally by creating connections between Correa, leftist intellectuals, the public, and mining corporations to deem sustainable mining development as necessary for national development and progress. Through ethnographic methods, I show how post-neoliberal forms of governance, including the criminalization of protest movements, public insults, and rumors, reorganizes the terrain of popular politics. Furthermore, I document how multinational corporations increasingly latch onto state managed nationalist discourses to create favorable terms for their projects. I argue that one important effect of post-neoliberal governance is that popular environmental movements are increasingly faced with political double-binds that can limit their political agency. Post-neoliberal rule creates a dichotomy between material rights, as in the rights to food and shelter, and collective territorial rights such as those implicated in mining disputes. Rural farmers can accept the rights granted by the extractivist state, in the form of social welfare programs, but only if they relinquish territorial rights. President Correa has tethered the financing of social welfare programs with the expansion of oil extraction and future mineral projects. This dichotomy thus creates a tradeoff between state-sponsored social welfare programs and local resource autonomy. In addition, emerging forms of governance recreate mestizo nationalism, and reinforce racism and individual rights in resource related policies. Thus, my overall argument shows both continuities and ruptures between neoliberal and post-neoliberal governing regimes.

In the pages that follow in this introduction, I first provide an overview of mining activity in Ecuador, with an emphasis on the formation of contemporary mining conflicts. Second, I situate my study within relevant literature and explain key theoretical framework guiding my dissertation. Third, I explain this study's relationship to activist anthropology and efforts to decolonize the field. Lastly, I end with a summary of my chapters.

MINING IN ECUADOR

Conflicts over the future of large-scale mining development in Ecuador that I document in this dissertation are unprecedented. Ecuador is not a 'mining country' and it is best known as a petroleum producing nation. The country churns out over 500,000 barrels of crude per day, and is the fifth largest oil producer in the Americas. Meanwhile, Ecuador's mineral industry accounts for less than 1% of its GDP (Bustamante and Lara 2010). Most of the Ecuadorian mining industry is characterized as artisanal and of small-scale in spite of Ecuador's pre-colonial engagement in mineral extraction. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the history of mining in the southern Ecuadorian Andes, specifically focusing on the area around Cuenca. Though the Quimsacocha watershed was not a small-scale or artisanal mining area, other parts of the province of Azuay, have a long, even if sporadic, history of mineral extraction. I end with a discussion on the formation of contemporary mining conflicts.

In Southern Ecuador, Spanish colonizers looked to places where their indigenous predecessors mined for gold. Pre-Incan as well as Incan populations in the area of Cuenca made ornamental uses of the gold and copper they extracted (Chacon 1986). By the mid-

1500s, five different places just outside of Cuenca, as well as Zaruma to the west and Nambija to the east were producing gold under the Spanish crown (Chacon 1986). Ecuadorian deposits, said to be wide, deep, and promising were never developed. Historians of the region suggest that the area surrounding Cuenca had a relative low Indigenous population that could be sent to work in the mines (Chacon 1986, Lane 2004). They speculate that pre-conquest wars among indigenous groups as well as disease, indigenous rebellion, and flight all contributed to a scarcity in labor. Due in part to labor scarcity, Viceroy Toledo shifted energy towards the extraction of minerals in Potosí, Bolivia and Huancavelica, Peru (Chacon 1986). Toledo's only real effort to send in *mitayos*, or indebted Indian labor, to Zaruma largely failed and slaves of African descent were deemed too expensive (Lane 2004).

While the Cuenca mines were mostly abandoned by the late 1600s, Zaruma continued to operate on a much smaller-scale under Creole hands. Mining was revived in the 1800s. Simon Bolívar, with the creation of Gran Colombia, ordered the rehabilitation of colonial mines including those in Cuenca (Einzmann 1991). However, a thriving agricultural industry largely meant that mining become a secondary activity that complimented agricultural activity during hard times. For instance, people turned to mining as an economic alternative to agriculture during an exceptionally long drought at the end of the 1800s. The drought resulted in lost crops and an abandonment of land for mining (Einzmann 1991)

People once again turned to mining during the great depression. Apparently, people of all ages including children panned for gold along the rivers that flowed

eastward through Cuenca and surroundings (Chacon 1986; Einzmann 1991). This included the Rio Tomebamba and Rio Paute (that flows from Quimsacocha) as well as the Rio Sigsig and Gualaceo. In the height of the renewed gold fever, the *Escuela Superior de Minas* was established in 1930 as an affiliate of the University of Cuenca to train mining engineers (Chacon 1986). The school lacked funding and was closed shortly after it opened its doors.

Ecuador had a short lived period of industrial mining activity during this time. At the turn of the 20th Century, the South American Development Company, SADCO, a subsidiary owned by the Vanderbilt family, extracted gold from the coastal mines of Portovelo. The company prospected, extracted and developed gold in the area until 1950 (Acosta 2009). Like earlier mines, SADCO also drew from rural labor pools outside of Cuenca. My elderly collaborators recall that men from Victoria del Portete migrated to work in the coastal mines for short periods.² One identified his work in the mine as shaping his opposition to mining development due to the contamination he saw. Gold extraction continued on a small-scale in Portovelo until the early 1970s (Acosta 2009). Mining resurfaced as a viable source of livelihood in the 1980s. Reeling from the economic crisis that devastated agrarian communities, campesinos concentrated in the areas outside of Cuenca turned to small-scale gold mining as a way to complement agricultural activities (Einzmann 1991). Working in then-recently discovered gold deposits of the eastern edge of the Andean mountain range, they set up cooperatives to

² Campesinos also travelled to work in banana plantations just north of mining areas too. People recalled that their kin and neighbors often returned from the coast dressed in all white, with a coastal accent and their nose turned upwards rejecting Andean culinary delights such as roasted cuy.

organize artisanal mineral extraction. Other colonial mines were also reactivated between 1980 and 1990, principally those in Santa Barbara and Nambija (Acosta 2004).

Mining Conflicts

Contemporary mining conflicts that I analyze in this dissertation coincide with the concerted effort of the state and international financial institutions to develop a large-scale industrial mining industry in Ecuador. A first set of conflicts focused on mineral claims. The Direction of Military Industries (DINE), then-owners and managers of state mineral resources, granted concessions to companies backed by foreign capital.³ The claims made by the companies came into conflict with those made by campesinos associated with mining cooperatives to the southwest of Cuenca. Lacking the money to legalize their concessions, campesinos were presented with a limited set of options. They could be absorbed into the companies as employees, create partnerships with them, or accept a one-time buy-out payment. In the worst of cases, campesinos were violently displaced (Einzmann 1991). In Carmen de Pijilí, campesinos mounted an organized campaign to defend lands and mineral claims, fearing that companies would jeopardize forms of livelihood that were based on a combination of agriculture and artisanal mining.⁴ Although important to note, these types of conflicts would not reach the level of intensity, scale, and duration of mining conflicts I analyze in this dissertation.

3 “Cooperativas y campañas mineras in Sta. Isabel y Pucará,” popular education material authored by Frente de Defensa de la Vida, Ponce Enriquez Azuay; Federación Regional de Cooperativas Mineras; Centro de Educación y Capacitación del Campesinado del Azuay. 1989

4 Ibid.

A strong push to tap new metal deposits came from international organizations in the 1990s. New policies set the legal and political groundwork for the contemporary environmental conflicts. A study by the UN's Economic Commission on Latin America demonstrated that between 1960-1980 Latin American countries consumed twice as many metals as they produced (CEPAL 1989). The study projected that the region would exhaust its known gold deposits by the year 2000 if Latin American countries did not expand mining extraction.⁵ Furthermore, CEPAL identified a lack of investment in the mining sector and lack of knowledge regarding mineral deposits as the two main factors responsible for the projected shortage of metal production in the region (CEPAL 1989).

In the early 1990's, the World Bank financed a technical and legal assistance loan called the Project for Mining Development and Environmental Control. The project is widely known by its Spanish acronym, PRODEMINCA, would help Ecuador respond to the shortage of mineral production identified by CEPAL. It aimed to "raise private capital investments" in the Ecuadorian mining industry by regulating small-scale mining activity; mapping mineral deposits; and changing Ecuadorian mineral codes to favor foreign investment.

First, the PRODEMINCA loan organized a team of consultants to study small-scale and artisanal mining on the coast and its effects. Studies financed by PRODEMINCA showed that the artisanal and small-scale mining activity, especially on the eastern end of the Andes in the province of Azuay, had nearly devastated rivers. Local rivers were identified as having high levels of cyanide and mercury, among other

⁵ Known gold deposits as of 1981.

heavy metals as a result of the amalgamation process. The study called for the remediation of several rivers, which never materialized.

As a response to ongoing environmental contamination, small-scale organic banana farmers organized the Association for the Defense of Our Rivers to advocate for the remediation of the rivers that were wrecking havoc on family-owned banana farms (Moore and Velásquez, forthcoming). These farmers joined campesinos from Victoria del Portete among other places concerned about large-scale mineral extraction, and expanded the wave of anti-mining movements to include organizations affected by small-scale mineral extraction. Their negative experiences with contamination of rivers also propelled some to participate and lead efforts to protect Quimsacocha.

Second, PRODEMINCA sent out survey teams across the country to map out geological information. The maps, according to activist Carlos Zorrilla, were sold on a CD-ROM to potential investors at \$7,000 a piece, listing 34 minerals earmarked for development.⁶ Copper was among the top mineral found. Carlos Zorrilla, who owns agricultural property in Intag—site of both survey work and Mitsubishi mining company concessions—founded DECOIN in the 1990's. His organization was among the first to call attention to state plans for the development of a large-scale mineral industry. Moreover, they filed a claim against the World Bank for violation of its environmental operation directives. As with the Association for the Defense of Our Rivers, DECOIN would also join the chorus of anti-mining activists during my period of study 2008-2010.

⁶ See <http://www.planeta.com/planeta/00/0007eczorilla.html>, accessed on June 21st, 2012.

Third, PRODEMINCA provided technical assistance to overhaul Ecuadorian mineral legislation. A neoliberal mining law was passed by the Ecuadorian Congress in 2000. As I discuss in Chapter 1, activists cite the problematic points to the new mineral code: it eliminated 3% royalty payments to the state; introduced a \$1-\$16 dollar patent payment schedule per hectare; opened protected areas for prospection and extraction; and made it impossible for the state to terminate mineral concessions on the basis of social or environmental impacts. The law also introduced an environmental framework for the mining sector. Companies were required to write an Environmental Impact Assessment for exploratory work and state environmental monitoring agencies were introduced. However, as I show in Chapter 1, these “green” mining frameworks shortchanged dairy farmers or campesinos’ concern about water pollution by redirecting their concerns back to a multinational corporation. State environmental monitoring institutions could not adequately address campesino petitions, stoking instead of ameliorating local resentments. Ultimately, the limits of a “green” mining framework fueled a significant opposition movement.

Mineral law changes led to a bonanza in the acquisition and speculation of mineral titles, and laid the groundwork for social and political conflicts over resources. Alberto Acosta, President Correa’s first Minister of Energy and Mines, said that the law led to a “hemorrhaging of mineral concessions,” [See Map 1] (Acosta 2009). Critics cite that over 4,000 mineral concessions were granted out, covering about 20% of the country’s territory without community consultation. They overlapped with indigenous, campesino, afro-Ecuadorian land and water sources; national parks and protected areas;

rural townships; and archeological sites (Acosta 2009). For instance, Toronto-based IAMGOLD corporation acquired concessions in the Quimsacocha páramo as well as *hundreds* of other mineral concessions across Ecuador after the new mining law was in place. Six-years after the neoliberal law was passed, violent confrontations between campesinos and indigenous people, companies, and the state took place over mining extraction. By the time Rafael Correa was sworn into office in January of 2007, mining was a burning issue in the country.

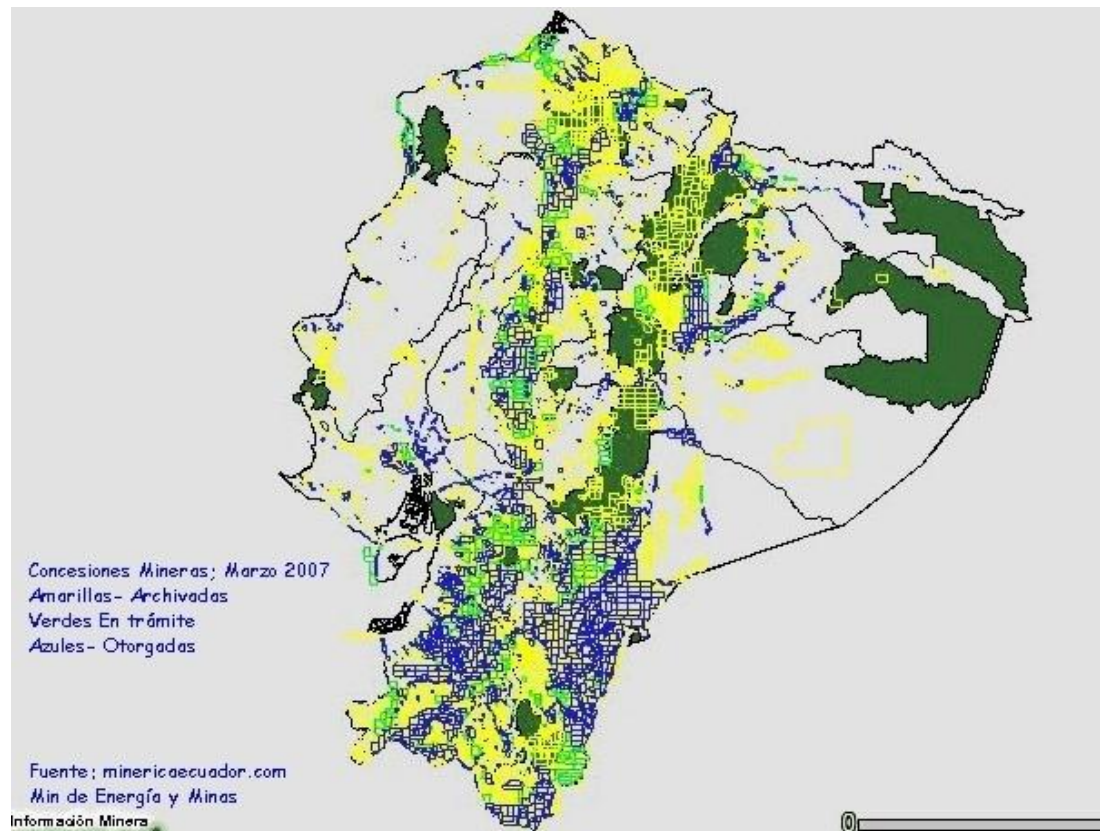


Figure 2: Mining concessions as of March 2007. Yellow denote concessions that were shelved by the Correa administration; Green were the concessions ‘in process’ of being granted; and blue were mineral concessions granted to domestic or foreign companies. Source: Ministry of Energy and Mines.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A CHANGING POLITICAL AND CONCEPTUAL TERRAIN

I situate my dissertation within the broader field of political ecology.

Foundational scholarship in the field examines how resource conflicts are simultaneously struggles over access, distribution, and control over natural resources (Bebbington 2007, Blake and Brookfield 1987, Peet and Watts 1996, 2004, among others) as well as struggles over meaning and representation (Eriksson 2000). My work contributes to this

scholarship by examining the role of non-human agency in shaping collaborations and conflicts over resource extraction.

The formation of transnational environmental movements is a crucial site through which an interdisciplinary group of scholars have studied questions of political agency in resource conflicts (e.g. Brysk 2000, Keck and Sikkink 1998, Moog Rodrigues 2004).

Beth Conklin and Laura Graham (1995) analyze how representations of the eco-noble Indian form a 'middle ground' that brings together indigenous people and international environmentalists who may have distinct political agendas (Conklin and Graham 1995, see also Brosius 1997). Tsing (2004) reminds us that collaborations across difference always produce change. Environmental coalitions have increased popular consciousness of environmental, human rights, and social justice issues (Carruthers and Rodriguez 2009), and coincide with the expansion of indigenous identities across the globe (e.g. Li 2000).⁷ Even in Peru, where mestizo racial hegemony is strong, farmers involved in an international campaign against Newmont came to identify as indigenous people (Bebbington, et. al 2007). This identification enabled them to ground their activism in territory and take advantage of international legal norms to protect indigenous rights (Bebbington, et, al 2007).⁸

Human geographer Tom Perrault adds a spatial analysis to the questions of popular environmental politics. In a comparative essay addressing the anti-neoliberal water and gas protests in Bolivia in 2000 and 2003 respectively, he asks why did the

7 Examining indigenous-environment relations taps into larger anthropological debates about indigenous essentialism (Cepek 2008, Friedman 1996, Hale 2006, Ramos 1994, Rogers 1996, among others).

8 Indigenous rights can also be drawn into state governing mechanisms and pose a problem for the exercise of collective indigenous political agency (e.g. Hale 2002, Postero 2007).

water ‘war’ take on a regional character, while the gas ‘war’ generated a national response (2006)? He argues that “the very physicality of the resources themselves, and the means by which they enter into circuits of capital and social reproduction,” played a crucial role in shaping the spatial nature of the two different mobilizations (2006: 165). For the farmers, water enters into social life through simple technology such as hand dug canals and came to symbolize life, but gas, mediated through large infrastructure, became associated with neocolonial exploitation (2006). Perrault’s analysis opens an interesting avenue to explore how social relations and meanings connected to natural resources can shape the contours of political agency.

Bolivian protests at the turn of the new millennium signaled a shift in the organization and discourses of popular environmental politics. The mobilizations in Bolivia, as well as recent mobilizations in Peru, Ecuador, and Argentina (see Zibechi 2012) point to a reorganization of popular environmental politics. Across the hemisphere, coalitions in ‘defense of life’ have formed across racial/ethnic differences. Discourses of life can encompass questions of livelihood, culture, and/or worldviews or *cosmovisiones* (see also Escobar 2008). These movements advocate for a range of resource justice issues from the nationalization of resources to community control over them. The mobilization of resource movements under neoliberal governments and their renewed strength under post-neoliberal popular governments points to continued reliance on resource extraction as a primary development model among many Andean nations and the limits to nationalist-based discourses for resolving popular resource conflicts (see Bebbington 2011, Moore and Velasquez 2011).

Even though these resource movements represent a shift away from identity-based environmental politics that dominated the 1990s, the use of indigenous cultural heritage symbols in the ‘defense of life’ protests are common especially in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador. Robert Albro (2005) and Nancy Postero (2007) note that the use of the whipala, appeals to *Taita Dios* and the *Pachamama*, as well as ceremonial rituals in popular Bolivian protests invoke Andean cosmology. They argue that a generic appeal to Andean cosmology effectively brings together people who have shared cultural and class positions. Though this dissertation addresses similar concerns, I argue that the recentering of indigeneity in multi-ethnic coalitions comes in spite of differences in culture and class. Instead, I suggest that the use of indigenous symbols and the adoption of an indigenous identity does not signal a shared cultural or class position, but a rather a particular way of understanding and relating to the environment that emerges through resource struggles.

Marisol de la Cadena’s article *Indigenous Cosmopolitics* (2010) offers an interesting counterpoint to the recent turn to Andean culture politics in resource struggles. She points out that a modernist framework, which separates nature from culture, guide many of our analysis of indigenous politics (see also Latour 2004). For instance, the appearance of sentient mountain beings and earth practices to venerate the Pachamama in Andean political protests is often relegated to the realm of the cultural (as mentioned above). But doing so, she suggests, denies the ontology of nature as well as the ontology of indigenous difference, thereby reinforcing forms of epistemic power and privilege that took root more than 500 years ago. Partially working through a decolonial framework, de la Cadena argues for the recognition of sentient beings as veritable actors on the political

arena. She calls for greater attention to the “ontological pluralization of politics,” that is, the examination of “adversarial relations among worlds” (2010: 360; see also Blaser 2009). This implies a new definition of politics and political agency beyond the ones that traditionally inform our analysis.

My conceptualization of political agency is related to, but distinct from, de la Cadena’s proposal. I draw from de la Cadena’s work to conceptualize an expansive political field where non-human entities and processes are given a role as enablers of human political agency. I follow de la Cadena’s assessment that expanding the conceptual field of politics is part of an effort to decolonize western epistemologies that have subjugated or ignored subaltern forms of knowledge production and *cosmovisiones*. Yet, I remain unconvinced that sole focus on ontological struggles encapsulates the political field that my primary collaborates had to navigate in their struggle to protect their water resources from mineral extraction. For instance, in their struggle to defend water resources women rejected sexism within the movement and formed their own organization. Similarly, male community leaders rejected Correa’s racist insults that reinforced a mestizo-urban common sense. Thus, resource politics intersect with ontological and epistemological questions *as well as* questions of racism and sexism from within and outside of the social movement.⁹

Moreover, the ontology of nature is recognized in the constitution of 2008. The constitution grants Pachamama the right to exist and persist, but such declarations are

⁹ In fact, de la Cadena insists that vocabularies such as race, gender, culture, environmentalism, etc. form part of the problem because they work within the nature-culture divide.

written alongside other articles in the constitution to promote resource extractive industries. The recognition of Pachamama, in the case of the mobilization that I follow, became important to enable new forms of social movement resistance but also forms of statecraft too. Instead, I view indigenous *cosmovisiones*, such as Pachamama, as one of many entities, discourses, and processes that help connect social movement and the state into relations of conflict and collaboration. Thus, I find it more productive to situate my work within analyses of environmental conflicts that focus on the networks, articulations, or connections that comprise them (Bebbington et al 2007, Sawyer 2007), with the added focus on the role that objects and non-human entities play in helping establish and expand these political networks.

I borrow from Stuart Hall's notion of articulation and actor network theory to examine how forms of knowledge (science, religion), discourses and catch-phrases, and nature (water, pachamama), enable the formation of connections and conflicts among and between a diverse group of people into collectivities that can be recognized as a 'social movement' and 'the state,' and then trace their effects. First, I build from Stuart Hall's work on the theory of articulation to ask: under what conditions can and do elements that have no natural belonging come together (1986)? The formation of the coalitions that I examine for instance cut across ethnic, gender, and class lines, and therefore the people in question, have no shared histories of oppression and exploitation that makes them into a 'natural' political class. In fact, the primary collaborations with I examine are made among dairy farmers who are unevenly positioned into the local capitalist dairy economy, and have historical tensions over water resources. To become collective political subjects,

people must find ways of generating coalitions in the absence of such shared histories, which even if they did exist, do not automatically impute an already made unified political subject (Hall 1986).

Second, I borrow from actor-network theory (ANT). In its broadest endeavor, ANT provides a method for the tracing of associations or assemblages that comprise the social world by taking into consideration both human and non-human agency. Similar to Gramscian notions of hegemony or Hall's concept of articulation, Latour (2005) argues that the 'social'—which includes the topography of power and inequality—is made up of associations or collaborations. However, a crucial distinction is the introduction of non-human agency in explaining the composition and forms through which these associations take. Agency is refigured, not as the ways in which human beings create their world, but as actors: "*anything* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor," (Latour 2005: 71). This does not mean that actors determine social worlds, but that they may "might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid and so on," (Latour 2005: 72). For example, in my dissertation, I show how a severe drought in southern Ecuador made visible the importance of water in everyday life and motivated urban people to join the movement in defense of life. In this way, I show how a non-human actor can potentialize the agency of social movements by enabling new connections to form between unlikely groups.

ANT as a method allows one to trace the connections or assemblages that form power and its resistance, which have come to define what scholars refer to as "empire" or "multitude" or "neoliberalism" without relying on these concepts to do the explaining

(e.g. Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004). This helps correct declarations that political resistance to global processes is ‘natural’ or inevitable (see Sawyer 2007’s critique of Multitude), or analyses that focus on neoliberalism as a top-down oppressive force with the power to remake subjectivities (e.g. Postero 2000).

As I examine the formation of anti-mining coalitions and their engagement with the state, I integrate an intersectional analysis. I highlight the simultaneous ways in which gender, race, and class connect people in uneven ways in their access to water resources as well as their role and position in anti-mining coalitions. While political ecologists have examined how resource conflicts intersect with questions of class (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, Martinez-Alier 2002), gender (Rocheleau et. al. 1996), and race (Mollett 2006, 2011), the analysis of these three forms of social differentiation have remained separate. Thus, I build from third wave feminist (e.g. Combahee River Collective 1977) to show how water resources as well as positions of leadership in resource mobilizations are distributed unequally along the race, class, gender axis.

Disconnections and double-binds

Connections provide a key conceptual tool in this dissertation, however, I am equally interested in disconnections, or moments where activists fail to establish connections with those whom they share similar political goals. Disconnections come in a variety of forms but they stem from contradictory political situations. I show how activists at every turn are confronted with contradictions or double-binds. For Kim Fortun (2001), double-binds are defined as “situations in which individuals are confronted with dual or multiple obligations that are related and equally valued, but incongruent,” (p. 13).

For instance, Indian activists working on the Bhopal legal case were faced with the choice of having the trial in US courts or in Indian courts. There were equally compelling reasons as to why the case should be heard in both places, but Indian activists could only choose one (p. 12).

Similarly, the road towards the consolidation of a regional and national anti-mining movement was filled with contradictory choices that dairy farming activists had to make such as the choice to protest the Correa government or continue to lobby the government with their political demands. On the one hand, the contradictory choices were shaped by the heterogeneous composition of the activists, some of whom have internalized mestizo racism, as well as disagreements over political platform and strategies. On the other hand, and most significantly for my collaborators, the double-binds were also the effect of having a popular, anti-neoliberal president in office that supported mineral extraction.

My research collaborators often called the state a *tramposo* state, which means deceitful or one that sets up traps. In the words of Diane Nelson (2009), they experienced and talked about Correa as a two-faced state, which uses nationalist rhetoric as a mask to hide the ongoing power of multinational mining corporations. Activists noted that while Correa promised to end neoliberal policies by reinvesting in the improving the material lives of its citizens through welfare programs, the state also threatened to take away their life by claiming important rivers, lands, and forests (lifelines that connect *cosmovisiones* with livelihoods) for state-corporate development projects like mineral extraction. While activists often denounced the state as *tramposo* in public and private forums; they were

constantly at risk for counter-attack, in which Correa suggested that they too were *tramosos*, posing as progressive activists in the defense of nature but who were really aligned with the right wing and international elites.

Thus, activists had to find ways of moving politically forward, in spite of the risk for counter attacks and the double-binds produced by the populist government. This proved to be a very different kind of political conjuncture than previous years where alliances between the president, multinational corporations, and national elites were publically aired. The duplicitous nature of the Correa state coincides with those analysts who suggest that post-neoliberalism is a “hybrid formation” that brings together multiple ideological strands (Fabricant and Gustafson 2011, Fernandes 2010, Postero 2010).

METHODS, ACTIVISM, AND POSITIONALITY

Post-colonial feminists, scholars of color, and others have drawn attention to the ways in which traditional social science methods have reproduced power relations between researcher and researched (e.g. Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Various responses and methods have been proposed as ways to overcome these power dynamics, if not fully in practice, then in ways that further the political goals of communities that are subjects of research. My dissertation research is in dialogue with research methods that seek to simultaneously decolonize the field of anthropology as well as contribute to the political struggles of communities marginalized global capitalist systems, (e.g. Mohanty 2003). As a Chicana anthropologist born and raised in a working class family, my life, education, and work/research experiences in the US as well as Ecuador have shaped my

idea of social and environmental justice. I see my collaboration, particularly with subsistence and small scale dairy farming men and women, as part of a global struggle for social and environmental justice and for the building of a more equitable world.

To practice, or at least, approximate a decolonial research methodology, I followed activist research methods, whereby the research agenda is shaped in dialogue with the political goals and daily collaboration with activist groups (see Hale 2008, Speed 2008). Initially, my field research was conceptualized as interviewing those families for and against mineral extraction. However, upon my arrival I found it impossible to undertake this type of research. People in the movement wanted to know who I was, why I was there, and what side I was on. Having worked on resource justice issues since I first arrived in Ecuador in 2000, I knew exactly with which side my political loyalties lay. I don't believe this study would have been possible without having publicly declared my affiliation and collaboration with an anti-mining organization.

I made my entry into Victoria del Portete and Tarqui through an organization called the National Coordinating Committee for the Defense of Life and Sovereignty. The *Coordinadora* as it was often called was a loose coalition of anti-mining campesinos from across southern Ecuador. The *Coordinadora* helped organize a local women's organizations, and then later during the course of my fieldwork, a national women's group called the Defensoras de la Pachamama or Defenders of the Pachamama. Through the *Coordinadora*, I helped facilitate workshop, co-organized an international women's conference, and administer a human rights questionnaire. Through these activities I learned a lot about how women experienced mining conflicts in their everyday lives, and

why and how they protested against the mine. My closest field collaborators were women I met with the *Defensoras*.

My collaboration with the *Coordinadora* from January through August of 2008 closed me off to closely collaborating with other organizations. At the same time that the *Coordinadora* organized campesinos against mining development, the Victoria-Tarqui community water system also organized its constituents against IAMGOLD. The tensions between the two groups and its origins are addressed in Chapter 2. For my research, my close collaboration with the women's groups made it difficult to establish an equally close affiliation with the water board leaders. However, I tried my best to bridge the divisions between the two organizations.

One way that I attempted to bridge these divisions was to literally work from the space which I occupied. Given the complexities and divisions within the anti-mining movement, I linked up with a group of urban activists and foreigners to establish the Quizha-Quizha collective in May 2008. The collective was comprised of myself, another PhD student from abroad, an Argentinean anti-mining activist, a Canadian journalist, two urban mestizo activists involved in the anti-mining movement, and an mestizo school teacher from a working class background. My affiliation with Quizha-Quizha was one way in which I tried to contribute to and further the political goals of the anti-mining movement. We undertook several different kinds of activities. We organized the screening of three documentaries related to the impacts of mining, translated IAMGOLD documents from English to Spanish, authored online articles about protests and repression, raised money for a woman activist whose life was in danger, and many other

activities. We tried to bridge the divisions between the two organizations by focusing attention to the broader struggle over community rights to resources.

My collaboration with the *Coordinadora* ended in August 2008 for several reasons. Among the most important, was that my funding came from the Inter-American Foundation (IAF). Rumors circulated in the southern Amazon, where the *Coordinadora* worked, that 1) the IAF was funding a researcher who was in support of mining development and 2) that I was financing the organization. The legitimacy of the organization came into question. Simultaneously, rumors began to circulate that I was working for IAMGOLD. Doña Berta, my closest collaborators received an anonymous phone call that I was an informant for a mining company. These rumors began to affect my relationship with the women, until ultimately I was asked to leave the organization. Moreover, there were ideological and political differences between myself and *Coordinadora* leaders, which may have also affected their decision to end our collaboration. At the time, I was not the only one that experienced an end to their relationship with the organization. Two mestizo urban activists close to the organization found themselves delisted from the email list serve and uninvited to the meetings. The *Coordinadora* leaders appeared to be closing the organization off to collaborators.

After a couple of months, I managed to slowly reestablish my credibility in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui. I began to develop a collaborative relationship with the community based water board leaders, but developed and deepen my relationships with the campesina women I met through the *Coordinadora*. My relationship with the water board leaders and many of its constituents was not as close as my initial relationships

established with the National Coordinating Committee. Eventually, some of the women and men affiliated with the *Coordinadora* joined forces with the community water boards. Overall, I found that this research method changed my own political subjectivity. Through my collaborations with various activist organizations in the anti-mining movement I myself became an anti-mining activist.

Positionality

In Ecuador, my physical appearance led some people to see me in familiar terms. Some people in the field believed that I was a student activist from Chile, Venezuela, Colombia or even from Quito. My closest collaborators knew that I am from an immigrant family, which helped established connections of familiarity between us. I conducted fieldwork in an area with a high US migration rate. Many of those I worked with had siblings or children living in the US. In one particular case, the sister of a research collaborator living in LA came to visit. We laughed because her Spanish accent was so thoroughly Mexican, while I had adopted a *Cuencana* accent.

My experience as a US born daughter of Mexican immigrants enabled me to make connections with men and women. I had long conversations with men who had spent time in New York working in Italian restaurants, driving taxis, and living in crowded apartments. I also listened to stories of mothers and wives whose sons and husbands lived in the US. Doña Berta—one of my closest collaborators—had three sons living in New York. She came to understand my positionality as similar to that of her granddaughters in growing up in New York City; they are the daughter of migrant parents who are growing up bilingual but do not have strong connections with their parents’

country. In addition, to histories of migration, I also grew up in a Catholic household and most of the people I worked if not all were devout practicing Catholics. I accompanied people to church and religious community celebrations even though in the US I am not a practicing Catholic. However, my Catholic faith was partially renewed with the participation of priests in the anti-mining movement.

The moments of familiarity also came with plenty of moments of cultural misunderstandings and confusions. I knew very little of Andean foods, traditions, and linguistic practices. Moreover, the moments of understanding and connection did not make up for the power relations in our relationship. My position as a US citizen and student with access to funding and education position me in different ways than my research collaborators and their families. I always remained a North American researcher—a *gringuita*—that was not a part of the communities to which my collaborators belonged.

Being a woman and a brown-skinned foreigner living in Cuenca, I became keenly aware of the ways in which whiteness is overvalued in the area. At certain moment, and in certain situations, my inability to perform and embody an ‘authentic’ Gringa identity or an ‘authentic’ Latina one closed some doors. Moreover, my position as a woman made it difficult to access certain information. The management and organization of irrigation systems fell under a masculine domain and I was not able to conduct a lot of research about the irrigation systems. Much of my research that took place in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui apart from the protests and marches, occurred mostly in the homes of women;

at their kitchen tables, over the roasting of guinea pigs and chickens, or in their backyard pasture lands and garden plots.

Overall, this research project does not pretend to be “neutral” or “objective.” This is a project aligned with social movements, and is best described as a “situated knowledge,” (Haraway 1988, cf. Hill Collins 1990). My experiences and observations are born from my place along the race, class, gender, nationality lines.

PEOPLE AND PLACES



Community trip to the Quimsacocha páramo

The cold highland air wicked up through the hills, and pierced through the many layers of clothes and woolen shawls that we wore to keep warm. The landscape was

expansive with open rolling hills marked by thick, straw-like tufts of grass and craggy rocks. Except for IAMGOLD's welcome sign and a few wooden structures the company has built, it does not look like a mine site. Don Javier, wearing bright yellow rubber boots stopped me, Doña Berta, and her daughter Mari. Look he said, as he jumped up on a small green patch. Water flooded out into a stream. "Pure water," he declared. People called these patches "*colchones de agua*" meaning water cushions. Scientists refer to this spongy soil as the páramo—a high altitude moorland ecology that stores, distributes, and regulates water supply.¹⁰

We, alongside 250 other people, hiked through the Andean páramo at 3800 meters in a symbolic act to reclaim the land. This páramo used to be known as *Hato Sombrederas*, named after a hillside that is formed in the shape of a hat. One hundred years ago, it was collective land where people grazed their cows. Later, it was declared a national protected forest.¹¹ Now, the páramo is slated for mineral development and lies at the center of national controversy. Toronto-based IAMGOLD corporation holds four mineral concession spanning over 8,000 hectares as well as several land titles.

IAMGOLD named the mine project 'Quimsacocha' meaning three lakes in Kichwa after a cluster of three beautiful lagoons in the wetlands. The company estimates that there are 3.2 million ounces of gold with additional deposits of silver, copper, and molybdenum in the volcanic rock that lays beneath the soft, water-soaked soil. Mineral deposits overlap with the water supplies of thousands of rural famers, some of whom participated in the

10 Páramos are unique ecosystems that provide over 60 Andean cities with water supply, as well countless campesino families

11 38,130 hectares in the area are designated as protected forests. This is comprised of the Sunsun-Yanasacha forest at 4,720 hectares and the Yanuncay-Irquis protected forest comprising 33, 410 hectares.

symbolic take-over of the wetlands. They oppose the mine because they fear that gold extraction will adversely affect water quality and quantity, but IAMGOLD and the state argue that top-of-the-line technology used in the mine will not affect their water supply. The trip to the wetlands was organized by the Victoria-Tarqui drinking water board, which services more than 1500 rural families with drinking water. They are not willing to take the chance of contamination.

Of the many streams and rivers that are born in the páramo, the Irquis River is the most important one for my collaborators. The Irquis River snakes eastward down into the valley below, bringing drinking and irrigation water to the homes and farms that dot the rural parishes of Victoria del Portete and Tarqui. The bulk of mining opponents live along the former Pan-American Highway that cuts through both parishes. Aside from being páramo water users, they all participate unequally in the local dairy economy.

Social differences are visible from the highway, but in a counterintuitive way. Driving southward from Cuenca, the *barrios* in Tarqui are characterized by homes that are clustered together. Many of the homes are three or four story cement edifices built with the money from migrant family members living in the US. Although migrant remittances appear to have improved the lives of many of these families, the family farms are still considered to be ‘small’ or even ‘subsistence’ farms. The family members left behind might have anywhere from two to eight dairy producing cows. Behind the homes and to the hills in the west are small patches of grazing lands and small gardens with an assortment of root and winter vegetables growing. Many lack year round irrigation water so they must continuously rotate their flocks of sheep and cows from grazing patch to

another. Some of the pasture lands can be located more than a two hour walk up the westward hills towards the páramo.

In Victoria del Portete, the first *barrio* is San Pedro de las Escaleras. A church teeters on a steep hillside to the west of the road, and to the east a crowded set of ostentatious homes dwarf the single story adobe ones. Just as in Tarqui, patches of planted corn are squared off next to grazing pastures. Women can often be seen tending to the garden or the cows. Many of them wear the traditional gathered skirt called a *pollera* and fit the profile of the much celebrated *Chola Cuencana*. Many of the dairy farmers here and in Tarqui have indigenous ancestry, but very few speak Kichwa or identify as indigenous. San Pedro de las Escaleras is the hub of anti-mining activism, and though the people from here did not occupy visible leadership positions, they form the popular base of street protest and marches against mining extraction.

Further up the road and passed the sparse cement ‘plaza’ of Victoria del Portete, the houses grow further apart and the land, especially in the summer months, is a strikingly vivid green color. The garish three or four story homes appear less frequently. Many of the houses are modest and made of traditional building materials such as adobe and red-tiled roofs. The homes are set back from the road and sometimes surrounded by vast stretches of land. On this side of the parish, mid-sized family dairy farms as well as industrial dairy operations dominate the landscape. They enjoy closer and more frequent access to the irrigation water that flows from the páramo. Here, a large family or industrial farmer might have 50 or 80 cows in production. Although the untrained eye might not see it, even the cows on the southern end of the parish are different. Large

dairy farmers tend to have pure-breed European stock cows that produce far more milk than their *criollo* or mixed breed counterparts found in many of the family farms in Tarqui and San Pedro de las Escaleras.¹² Some owners of the large dairy farms support the opposition movement, but few are visible in their support of the anti-mining protests. The IAMGOLD mine project has rearticulated local conflicts, bringing these diverse and heterogeneous dairy farmers into collaboration together. Dairy farmers from Victoria del Portete and Tarqui have historically disputed access to water. People in San Pedro de las Escaleras and Tarqui often complain that the *hacendados* from Victoria del Portete monopolized water supplies. These tensions have not disappeared but are rearticulated into conflicts against IAMGOLD and against their neighbors who either support the company or remain ambivalent about mining development.

My closest research collaborators are representative of the diverse set of activists belonging to the anti-mining movement. Doña Berta and her two daughters Mari and Beatriz both grown women in their 30's, often appear in this dissertation. They are a dairy farming family from a *barrio* in the parish of Tarqui just south of San Pedro de las Escaleras. The family primarily lives from their small dairy farm and remittances sent from Doña Berta's two sons who live in New York. The family has indigenous ancestry but identifies as mestizo and/or campesino.

12 The structures of the dairy industry also benefit large producers in another way: I've been told that middle-men pay more money per liter of milk from large dairy producers for their steady supply and high quality milk. Though this appears to have some economic reasoning behind it, I have often wondered if the close ties between the middle men and large producers may also affect the pricing in terms favorable to the owners of the large dairy farms.

Rosita was also one of my closest collaborators. Like Doña Berta's family, she also has a small dairy farm but is unmarried and without children. She is a catechist with a fiery spirit. Rosita also has indigenous ancestry and her father used to have collective grazing lands in Quimsacocha. All four of the women participate in a women's group formed under the *Coordinadora*. Also important are Lina and Julia. Both are urban activists from Cuenca. Lina is the primary leader of the National Coordinating Committee, while Julia collaborated with the organization and the women's organization in advisory role. She is a well respected organizer. She is the daughter of Cuenca's most prominent activist who started Cuenca's feminist movement in the 1970s, and has been involved in feminist and union organizations for several decades herself.

In addition to these women, several men occupy an important place in the movement and in this narrative. Benjamin Macias manages his family's mid-sized dairy operation in the southern end of Victoria del Portete. He holds a Master's degree and has organized other mid and large dairy farmers in his parish against the mine. His neighbor, Don Julio Loza was also an important collaborator. Don Julio is the former parish lieutenant for Ecuador's most conservation political party: the Social Christian Party.

Oscar was also an important collaborator, though he only makes an appearance in the second half of the dissertation. He is from the center of Tarqui. Though he is not a dairy farmer himself, he grew up in an agrarian family and hopes to make a living from an eco-cultural tourism project. He is among the few that celebrates his indigenous heritage and speaks freely about racism in the two parishes.

Carlos Perez and his relative Luis Morocho were also important figures. Carlos Perez is a practicing lawyer in Cuenca with a past political career in the region. He was the legal advisor to the Victoria-Tarqui drinking community water board, and in the second half of my dissertation fieldwork became the president. He is the Tarqui counterpoint (so to speak) to Benjamin. While the relationship between Benjamin and Carlos can be tense, the two know how to work together when necessary. Luis was the former community water board president and then became the manager of the system.

In addition to the various organizations I worked with, I also collaborated closely with independent Canadian journalist Jennifer Moore. Like myself, Jennifer lived in Cuenca and had an interest in writing about the anti-mining movement. We did some of the research that appears in this dissertation together with funding and support from the Research Program on Territory, Conflicts, and Development in the Andes directed by Anthony Bebbington while he was at the University of Manchester in England.

CHAPTER MAP

This dissertation is organized into two parts: mining and water. The first part corresponds to debates over IAMGOLD's proposed gold mining project. In this part, which is comprised of four chapters, I document the rise of the anti-mining movement under a neoliberal government and then trace the difficulties that the movement faces in maintaining its unity and expanding its allies under the Correa administration. Analytically, each chapter in Part I explores a set of internal and external binds or predicaments that pose a challenge for activists and their unity. By the end of the first

part, the anti-mining activists find themselves losing an important battle against Correa's contentious mining law.

The second part shows the dramatic revival of the anti-mining movement but on completely different terms. Set against the backdrop of a proposed water law (which has implications for mineral extraction), the anti-mining movement re-emerges as a water rights movement, where water comes to symbolize life. The anti-mining movement's connections with the national indigenous movement, along with the adoption of Andean cultural discourses and concepts, are a crucial ingredient to the movement's success. Unlike the mining law, the new coalition makes important gains to the proposed water law. Collective politics lead to some important transformations. The watershed becomes a symbol of life and farmers come to identify as 'indigenous.' This transformation in their identity signals a shift in the ways in which they inhabit and think about their environment. This final section is comprised of three chapters, including the conclusion.

I examine the start of a movement against IAMGOLD in the first chapter. The chapter looks at how scientific studies come to organize opposition and collaboration in mining debates during 2005 to 2006, and asks: to what extent can the tools of neoliberalism be used against the very same system? IAMGOLD corporation used water quality studies to simultaneously fulfill legal obligations under neoliberal sustainable mining laws *and* secure community support for drilling in the Quimsacocha páramo. With these studies IAMGOLD created collaborative relations with the parish government of Victoria del Portete and university scientists. An opposing set of water quality studies were also used by dairy farmers to establish new connections for an opposition

movement. The scientific studies enabled IAMGOLD and the dairy farmers to make competing claims about the responsibility for contamination. I show how the scientific studies as well as the “green” state bureaucracy charged with adjudicating between the different studies are part of the “green” mining framework. Ironically, the limits of the “green” mining framework sparked an opposition movement against IAMGOLD.

The second chapter shows how the Correa administration intervened in conflicts between IAMGOLD and dairy farmer opponents. Activists were faced with the predicament of whether or not to dialogue with government. Key leaders from the community managed water systems decided to participate in a state dialogue forum, while others opted for protest. The water board leaders authored a legal study that showed how IAMGOLD violated procedural norms in the acquisition of the mining concessions in Quimsacocha. The Correa administration forced IAMGOLD to overturn a portion of its mineral concession back to the state for the conservation of hydrological resources. Under this scenario, the state takes on and extends “green” mining reforms introduced by neoliberal reforms in 2000. I call this an example of post-neoliberal environmentalism. The limits of the decision had the effect of dividing the local opposition movement into two factions. Ironically, this did not necessarily weaken the movement as it had the unlikely effect of empowering campesina women.

In Chapter 3, I followed campesina women as they lobby the National Constituent Assembly to stop mining development. Their efforts centered on the Mining Mandate, a piece of legislation that would annul most if not all mining concessions. Even though the National Constituent Assembly President promised to emit the Mining Mandate, it was

not immediately forthcoming. Campesina women affiliated with the *Coordinadora* staged road blockades and participated in meetings with place-based resource movements across the country. However, internal and external factors made it difficult for the organizations to generate political unity. On the one hand, internalized mestizo racism as well as different political ideologies emerged as a predicament facing the activist coalition and eventually prevented the *Coordinadora* from establishing firm alliances with the national indigenous movement. On the other hand, the Correa administration used violence, public insults, and rumors to stymie the growing protest movement and accused them of being aligned with the right-wing. Activists were caught between not wanting to bolster right-wing opposition but also wanting to launch a challenge to state mineral policy. I document the limits and possibilities of building a national coalition to stop extractive industries under these conditions.

In the fourth and final chapter of Part I, I specifically analyze the operation of state power under Correa. I trace how the spread of popular catch-phrases and rumors connected a disparate group of people, mining corporations, and institutions in favor of a proposed mining law. The law was favored by many Ecuadorians because it would expand mineral extraction on terms they believed were favorable to the state. The anti-mining movement opposed the law because it would open up rivers, mountains, and lands to mineral extraction without a binding community consultation. I show how Correa's catch phrases and rumors naturalized the use of violence against mining law opponents, reinscribed mestizo nationalism, and created new citizen subjectivities. All of these factors, created a predicament for the anti-mining movement and made it difficult for the

movement to garner enough public support to stop the passing of the contentious mineral law.

Part II begins with Chapter 5 where I trace how the anti-mining movement transformed into a movement for the defense of life. I show how water politics established collaboration between the community water systems in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui and the national and regional Indigenous movement led by the national indigenous movement CONAIE, and highland indigenous regional organization, ECUARUNARI. Together, they organized to improve Correa's proposed water law in ways that would protect páramos from mining activity and expand campesino and indigenous collective rights to use, manage, and protect water resources. The movement was framed around water as a source of life. It shows the efficacy of human and non-human agency. The effects were two-fold. One, the government made changes to the draft water law to reflect movement demands. Two, in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui, Quimsacocha remerged as Kimsakocha—the embodiment of the *Pachamama* and a source of life.

In Chapter 6, I document the final round of mobilizations over the water law. I trace how multiple meanings of “Plurinationalism” were constructed through public debates over the draft law. Plurinationalism as a discourse and political practice was mobilized by the movement for life to be part of a national development model that put Andean social and environmental philosophies and epistemologies into practice. Plurinationalism was redeployed by the government and industry against the movement for life. In contrast, they argued that Plurinationalism granted rights to *everyone* not just

“Indians.” They used this argument to bolster state monopoly over water administration and sideline the participation of subaltern mestizos and indígenas. The movement effectively framed debates over the water law resulting in an ambiguous win for the group. Indigenous identity as a political label to describe one’s relationship to *Pachamama* emerged as did lasting collaborations between the community water systems.

In the concluding chapter, I take a closer look at the reconfiguration of political subjectivities. I examine transformations in campesinos’ environmental subjectivities by analyzing their talk and memories of agrarian livelihoods that have changed with dairy farming and migration. Set against the debates over the water law, I argue that their talk and memories related to the environment reconstruct a sense of community, a connection with the land, and animate their participation in the defense of life.

A NOTE ON NAMES AND PLACES

Following the conventions of the discipline, I use pseudonyms for everyone except public figures. Place names remain the same as do the names of the organizations. Also, I use the terms that my collaborators used to identify the wetlands. At the beginning of the movement, the wetlands was known as *Sombrederas*—a term that appears in Chapter 1. Farmers began to call the wetland Quimsacocha after the company coined its project with that name. They appropriated this term and then later changed its spelling to Kimsacocha (sometimes Kimsakocha) to reflect the Kichwa alphabet. Although three different terms for the same place may appear confusing, I use the different spellings

because, following the insights of Mol 2002, these spellings reflect different entities. For instance, Sombrederas is derived from Hato de Sombrederas, when the wetlands functioned as collective grazing land; Quimsacocha is a mining project; and Kimsacocha or Kimsakocha is a source of life. Each term represents different ways of knowing and relating to the wetlands.

PART I-MINING & MOVEMENTS

Chapter 1: The Science of Corporate Social Responsibility¹³

INTRODUCTION

One morning on June 2006, a group of angry farmers surrounded Esteban Ortiz and his pickup truck as he drove to the parish council office.¹⁴ Armed with sticks and machetes, they shouted “thief!” and “sell-out!” The farmers were protesting Ortiz’s participation in a water sampling study led by IAMGOLD Corporation. Only months before, Ortiz, the president of the Victoria del Portete parish government, had signed a letter directed at state authorities that denounced IAMGOLD’s contamination of the local water supply. Now, Ortiz seemed to be participating in a study that some farmers believed would exculpate IAMGOLD from contaminating the local water supplies. Women in *polleras* opened the truck doors and pulled Ortiz out. The farmers detained Ortiz for several hours demanding his resignation from public office.

This spectacular act of community justice marked a significant moment in anti-mining organizing. Several of my collaborators recall this story as one of the first expressions of protest that consolidated the local movement against mining development. As I got to know more about the events leading to the ousting of Ortiz, I came to understand how this story—and their opposition—is intimately related to the limits of the

13 This chapter originally appears as: “The science of corporate social responsibility (CSR): Contamination and conflict in a mining project in the southern Ecuadorian Andes,” (June 2012). *Resources Policy*, Vol. 27 (2), 233-240.

14 The parish government is comprised of a president, vice-president, secretary and three council members. They are democratically elected by the residents of the parish and administer public funds for development and infrastructure projects.

neoliberal “green” mining framework that the World Bank helped establish in Ecuador, and which defines the terms of IAMGOLD’s engagement in the country.

The struggles over Ortiz’ political legitimacy were directly linked to his involvement with IAMGOLD’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects including a water monitoring program that was developed and expanded in the context of a heated public debate over the nature and causes of the contamination of the dairy farmers’ watershed. IAMGOLD initially carried out hydrology studies to establish the water quality of the Iquis River. The water quality studies showed a presence of fecal matter from which IAMGOLD consultants established that dairy farmers were responsible for the contamination of the river. From these conclusions, IAMGOLD proposed that the farmers and community members participate in an environmental oversight committee to “co-manage” the Iquis river watershed, which had up until then, been managed by various community-based irrigation and drinking water boards. In response, dairy farmers financed their own study and found that the Iquis River had four times the amount of lead permissible under environmental legislation. They concluded that IAMGOLD’s exploratory drilling in the páramo was responsible for the contamination.

This chapter focuses on the ways in which science helped organize public debates over mining. I follow Latour (2005) and argue that water studies can be understood as a mediator, a set of practices that enabled farmers to transform the debate over the nature and responsibility of water contamination.¹⁵ Whereas science enabled IAMGOLD to

15 Bruno Latour distinguishes intermediaries from mediators. Intermediaries, he argues are akin to a black box where the inputs are the same as the outputs (Latour 2005). A mediator, by contrast "is never a good

establish that dairy farmers were responsible for fecal contamination of the Irquis River, when used by a small group of dairy farmers, water studies allowed the farmers to shift the terms of the debate and establish that IAMGOLD was responsible for lead contamination. Through the mobilization of science, the small groups of farmers were able to establish new connections among other farmers, open up a public debate over the potential risks of mining exploration, and ultimately consolidate a local movement against mining extraction.

The use of science by farmers is certainly an uncommon form of protest. Science has been long critiqued by feminist scholars among others (see Lewontin 1992). Science claims to be an objective and value-free method of inquiry, but feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins point out that all social thought and forms of knowledge reflect the interests and standpoint of its creator (Hill Collins 1989). Donna Haraway compares claims to scientific objectivity as a gaze—as the power to see and not be seen—a “god trick” that embodies power and privilege (1988).

Even in mining conflicts in Peru, the scientific method has been deployed by powerful corporations to settle disputes with local residents (Himley 2009) and assure the public that “mining will not generate pollution or reduce the availability of water resources,” (Li 2011:62). As I follow disputes over contamination between the company and farmers, I explore the first double-bind that mining conflicts present: How does one challenge forms of power that appear to be based on objective and value free premises?

predictor of its output," because mediators "translate, transform, distort or modify meanings and elements," (Latour 2005:29).

The farmers don't want to be implicated in the contamination of their water resources because that could justify IAMGOLD's presence in the management of community watersheds, slowly eroding community autonomy and water rights. But if they do take on IAMGOLD through the use of science there is the risk that their water studies confirm IAMGOLD's results and implicate them in the contamination of water. Can the farmers use the terms of power, in this case science, to challenge the company?

GREEN MINING FRAMEWORK

Political struggles that encompass debates over scientific knowledge production coincide with the rise of "green" neoliberalism. Promoted by the World Bank and upheld by various state and non-state actors, "green" neoliberal reforms endorse the liberalization of natural resources for their development by international capital while expanding state environmental bureaucracy. These new state agencies are charged with overseeing a dense network of required techno-scientific reports such as the Environmental Impact Assessment, the Environmental Management Plan, and various other environmental audit mechanisms (Goldman 2005). "Green" neoliberal frameworks enable corporations to lay claim to indigenous and non-indigenous peoples' lands by promoting resource-intensive development strategies through the use of scientific and technical reports that are used to define, measure, and quantify the risks of their projects, often times in ways that conceal their potential harm (Goldman 2005, see also Beck 1992, Li 2009). Thus, power under a "green" neoliberal framework is exercised not only through the appropriation of territory for large-scale development but also through an

epistemological struggle where truths about environmental impacts of development are produced and debated.

Water quality studies used by IAMGOLD are situated within the above frameworks but go beyond them and move into the terrain of corporate social responsibility. IAMGOLD carried out the initial set of hydrology studies out of both procedural obligations under the Ecuadorian Law and out of the desire to expand exploratory work. This challenges traditional wisdom that distinguishes legally mandated practices from voluntary programs.

Practices related to CSR traditionally center on a set of voluntary, non-binding principle that make up sustainable development, whereby companies seek to maintain a social obligation to society and nature while maximizing profits (Blowfield and Frynas 2005). CSR can translate into the financing of community development programs, infrastructure projects, and environmental and health education programs underpinned by discourses of 'community empowerment' and 'local partnerships,' whereby corporations and their NGO allies take on the role of the state. Certainly, IAMGOLD finances many community development programs that fit this description such as a native plant and tree reforestation program and an organic family garden project. But this definition of CSR, does not account for the ways in which IAMGOLD began to use scientific studies to garner community support and their impacts in dividing local community members. I position my analysis within critical scholarship on CSR that redefines the term as a "system of knowledge and practice that embodies particular ways of interpreting and acting on the world," (Sharp 2006: 215; see also Kirsch 2010, Li 2010, and Raman 2010).

I show how scientific knowledge producing practices operate as a form of CSR and as an example of “green” mining practices legislated by World Bank reforms. These scientific knowledge producing practices organize public debates over mining development by establishing connections between corporations, rural residents, and various levels of government in ways that enable both collaboration and conflict.

DISPUTES OVER SCIENCE

IAMGOLD uses science

On June 29th 2005, the president of IAMGOLD-Ecuador emitted formal invitations to government authorities and community leaders to attend a ‘Public Dissemination and Information Workshop.’ The workshop aimed to “receive opinions and observations” related to IAMGOLDs Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plan.¹⁶ Local invitees were from the parish of Victoria del Portete and San Gerardo; areas situated within or nearby IAMGOLDs mineral concessions and recognized as ‘potentially affected populations.’ This was the first time that IAMGOLD tried to use science to create collaborative relations with the farmers from Victoria del Portete.

By this time, IAMGOLD had obtained two mineral concessions in the highland páramo known as Sombrederas in 2001 on the heels of neoliberal reforms to the mining law. The two concessions overlap with two nationally protected forests for which IAMGOLD successfully petitioned the state to obtain an environmental license to

16 IAMGOLD (July 8, 2005), “Acta de la Audiencia de Difusión y Participación Ciudadana del Alcance al Estudio de Impacto Ambiental y Plan de Manejo Ambiental de Proyecto Quimsacocha (Áreas Mineras Cerro Casco y Río Falso).”

conduct exploratory work. “Green” mining reforms required that IAMGOLD submit trimester reports detailing its environmental and social activities in the area, conduct trimester water testing, submit Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP), and hold information meetings with local communities

By the end of 2005, IAMGOLD completed its first phase of exploratory work concentrated in the parish of San Gerardo located southwest of Victoria del Portete. There, IAMGOLD financed community development programs and enjoyed the support of local leaders. IAMGOLD hoped to establish similar relations with leaders from Victoria del Portete. The second phase would move exploration work into the Iruquis River watershed. Although the community information and participation workshops are compulsory by law, IAMGOLD’s ability to secure the social license to operate is dependent on local community consent (see Gunningham 2002).

The workshop convened on July 8th, 2005 at the Hostería del Lago de Cristal; a luxurious inn (by most Ecuadorian standards) located in San Gerardo and up the steep road towards the Sombrederas wetlands. The inn is set around a lake and offers a variety of outdoor activities such as horseback riding, fishing, and swimming. It attracts Ecuadorian and international tourists and contains facilities for seminars and retreats. According to IAMGOLD documents, 40-60 people attended the meeting. Consultants

from Ambigest Consulting, Jonathan Padilla and Alejandro Hohnstein led the meeting in their capacity as IAMGOLD subcontractors.¹⁷

Padilla gave an overview of the EIA and PMA and provided details as to how exploratory drilling would proceed: drilling machinery and accessories would be brought in through the existing road, vegetation would be removed to make way for a drilling platform, and once the drilling was finished, the platform would be dismantled and the same vegetation initially removed would be reseeded with the same dirt (IAMGOLD 2005:2). The company planned to drill approximately eighty holes, two-hundred to three hundred meters deep, and six centimeters in diameter.¹⁸ Exploratory drilling work would enable IAMGOLD to recover hard rock samples, analyze them for mineral content, and create a detailed mineral deposit map.

Padilla surprised the assembled farmers with the information that IAMGOLD's periodic water sampling, which went "further than those required under the Environmental License and related legal norms," (IAMGOLD 2005: 2), proved that the water in the páramo was impure. Furthermore, Padilla said that testing showed that the "contamination was produced by community pasture [practices]" whereby the "streams receive the excrements of the cows, and become more contaminated downstream from human influences, be they from domestic activity...or chemical products from agriculture." (IAMGOLD 2005:2).

17 Ibid

18 Ibid

Indeed, several of IAMGOLD's technical reports and state environmental audit reports from 2003, 2004, and 2005 noted an increased in fecal matter in the effluents of the Irquis River compared with 2000 levels. IAMGOLD's expanded EIA, published a month before the meeting, noted that that the effluents of the Rio Irquis had presence of bacteria, coliforms, fecal coliforms, and yeast and fungus above the National Regulation (IAMGOLD 2004-2005).¹⁹ Padilla's presentation concluded with various avenues for corporate-community collaboration including financing of a project to co-manage the Irquis watershed, maintenance of roads for conservation work, environmental monitoring, and reforestation (IAMGOLD 2005), key center pieces in the "green" mining framework that seeks to promote a limited version of sustainability while facilitating extractive industries.

At the meeting, IAMGOLD's results provoked skepticism. Both Luis Morocho, representing the Victoria-Tarqui community drinking water board and Leonardo Calle, a local authority figure appointed by the governor, spoke up (IAMGOLD 2005: 4). They were concerned about mining's effects on the water supply. Padilla assured the leaders that exploratory work is safe because they use the popular cooking oil, *El Cocinero*, to lubricate the drill. Unsatisfied with the answer, Calle questioned, "but what happens when we are in exploration? We don't want our water to be contaminated," (IAMGOLD 2005: 4). IAMGOLD Community Relations manager, Xavier Terán stepped into the conversation to argue that oversight committees would be formed. This was not enough

¹⁹ The public copy I obtained had a blank page where lab results should have detailed the precise levels of the contaminants

for Luis Morocho: “We ask that things be clear, water comes first since our water comes out of the Irquis watershed. Please don’t be offended, but we simply want to guarantee water for future generations” (IAMGOLD 2005:4).

Morocho’s drinking water board was already struggling with a scarcity of water and some families, particularly those living furthest from the páramo, did not even have reliable water access throughout the day (Chapter 2). Terán insisted that the company’s concern for the protection of water was not merely discourse but that water should be guaranteed for all Ecuadorians and the protection of water required a project and collaboration of all parties: company, the state, and communities.

In the meeting IAMGOLD consultants used scientific studies to establish that dairy farmers are responsible for water contamination of the Irquis River. Based on these studies, IAMGOLD proposed to develop a collaborative partnership with local authorities and leaders in the form of the co-management of the Irquis watershed. Once Morocho and Calle expressed worry over the impacts of mining on water resources, Terán redirected their attention back to the formation of an oversight committee. As Terán said, “It’s the only way.” The science studies enabled IAMGOLD to fulfill its legal obligations and claim that contamination was a pre-existing condition caused by local livelihoods. Establishing contamination as a pre-existing condition can work as a way that a mining company can counter claims of contamination in the future by establishing it as unrelated to mining activity (Li 2009). Moreover, by making light of the potential impacts of mining development, IAMGOLD attempted to secure community support for the next phase of mining. Like other CSR programs, scientific studies and the proposals that

followed from it, were used as an attempt to “anticipate and dissipate” community conflict before project opposition even began (Bebbington 2010). Despite the failure of the meeting, the debate over science set the discursive and practical terms for future debates over mining in the region.

Farmers use science

Discontent was growing among rural residents. Benjamín Macías, a mid-sized dairy farmer and president of the local group, Committee for the Environmental Defense of the Iruquis River, had met with IAMGOLD representatives in 2005. Macías held a degree in animal science and was locally known as the *‘Ingeniero’* or ‘Engineer.’ He and a small group of dairy farmers from the southern end of Victoria del Portete were, like many residents and leaders, already concerned about the reduction of water flows in the river. They went to the Provincial Council office in Cuenca to find funding for a reforestation project, only to be turned in the direction of IAMGOLD.²⁰ At that time, IAMGOLD, with the help of rural residents from San Gerardo, carried out a reforestation project in which it hoped to sow 20,000 plants throughout 2005.

After exploratory work began, Macías noticed what he saw as a deterioration of the wetlands and native grasses. Most significantly, he noticed a set of hoses belonging to IAMGOLD that discharged what he believed to be untreated water directly into the effluents of the Iruquis River. In December of 2005, a small group of dairy farmers decided to finance their own water study. This idea was initially raised by a local landowner who, like Benjamín, also had a scientific background. They took lab samples

²⁰ Interview Benjamin Macias, May 24th, 2009.

to the Ecuadorian Commission on Atomic Energy. The lab results, according to a brief written by Macías, identifies that the effluents of the Irquis River have 100 micrograms (ug) of lead per liter of water, twice the amount of permissible limits which, according to Ecuadorian environmental legislation is set at 50 micrograms (ug) per liter.²¹ The farmers attributed the lead contamination to IAMGOLD's drilling. But when they confronted IAMGOLD representatives, they shrugged off the results as a fluke, a one-time accident from a motorcycle gasoline spill. Later, IAMGOLD's community relations manager would tell me that the lead "occurs naturally".²²

Macías convened community assemblies and conducted awareness-raising workshops and a core group of dairy farming activists began to organize against IAMGOLD. Rosita Zhingri, for example, is a subsistence dairy farmer from the community of San Pedro de Escaleras. She heard Benjamín Macías give a presentation after mass in the community of San Pedro de las Escaleras. She was impressed by his engineering expertise but understood mining's effects in through subaltern ways of knowing the environment. She summed up her subsequent activism as a way to "defend life...the maize, beans, *choclo*, wheat, and barley," [...] "they say we have worms in the water...but we have always lived like this, my parents drank from that water. Water is born from mother earth; she sustains us by feeding us. Pachamama [mother earth] is mother water."²³

21 Macías, Benjamín "Proyecto Minero Quimsacocha," March 26th, 2007. Unpublished paper.

22 Interview, Xavier Terán, November 29th, 2007.

23 Interview, Rosita Zhingri, May 28th, 2009.

Her story is significant because it illustrates how Macías, considered by some as a local elite, came to enjoy the support of small-scale and subsistence farmers with indigenous ancestry in his efforts to hold IAMGOLD accountable to the contamination. The two social groups had historically disputed access to water. Small and subsistence farmers living in communities furthest from water sources had occasional access to irrigation water depending on the location of the plots of their grazing lands. Mid and large-scale dairy farmers occupied pasture lands closest to water sources and often monopolized claims to water. Through technical studies revealing contamination, collaboration between these two antagonistic groups emerged.

For Julio Loza, scientific results had confirmed his suspicions. Loza is an elderly dairy farmer, former parish lieutenant for the conservative right wing party, and an active member of Macías' environmental group. In the first half of the 20th century, some *Victorienses* worked the mines of Portovelo, a gold mine of the US-owned South American Development Corporation (SADCO). His family sold cheese, clothes, and other highland goods to the miners.²⁴ Both he and another elderly man opposed to mining development worked in the Portovelo mines and recalled a yellowish sludge discharging into nearby rivers. Similarly, Benjamín Macías learned that small scale mining activity was responsible for the contamination of rivers in Tenguel, just west of Victoria del Portete on the other side of the páramo. In that case, scientists established that small-scale mining was responsible for heavy metal contaminants in the water that was adversely affecting small banana growers and their families (Moore and Velásquez, 2011).

24 Interview, Julio Loza, August 30th, 2009.

The science studies began to reorganize community alliances. The results of the farmer's tests accorded new meaning to the scarcity of water noted by some residents and their previous knowledge of mining and its effects. Most significantly, water quality studies carried out by the farmers shifted the debate over contamination. As I discuss below, once the farmers took the studies to public authorities, IAMGOLD and pro-mining authorities would have to demonstrate that IAMGOLD did not contaminate the water with lead.

The state uses science

In February of 2006 a group of nineteen water-board leaders, parish authorities, and supporters of Luis Macías sent a letter to the regional office of the National Direction of Mining. In the letter they said that they were “extremely concerned” about IAMGOLD’s concessions in Sombrederas, pointing out that “IAMGOLD did not explain the effects of their work and that adverse environmental effects on water reserves used by thousands of users were already visible.”²⁵ They demanded that the Regional Direction of Mining (DIREMI), a local arm of the Ministry of Energy and Mines, immediately shelve and extinguish IAMGOLD’s mining concession in order to respect the right of the community to live in a healthy environment.

The director of DIREMI, Mauricio Andrade, cited the 2000 neoliberal reforms to mining law in his response two weeks later. Annulment of a concession title could only take place upon nonpayment of patent rights and not on the grounds of environmental

²⁵ Letter directed to “Director of Regional Direction of Mining,” February 17th, 2006

contamination.²⁶ Andrade promised to send an inspection team in the coming days. In the end, the inspection never took place due to disagreements within different branches of national and provincial bureaucracy.

Community groups were angered by the months of delay, until finally on May 3rd 2006, water board leaders and a diverse coalition of dairy farmers blocked a road. For twenty-four hours, rural residents stopped traffic on the Pan-American Highway, which connects Ecuador's central and northern zones with major Southern cities. In their declaration, the water board leaders wrote, "we are concerned with the deterioration and destruction of the water sources...the shortage of water can be felt, there is little water for drinking and the in the summer months, the cows do not have pasture."²⁷ They demanded that local authorities make a public pronouncement on the issue and that they take action to defend natural resources. They also demanded that authorities respect their collective right to be consulted regarding the future of mining development under article 88 of the Constitution.

The local media and the municipal government of Cuenca became involved in the debates over mining that took on a racial tone. In the dominant urban *Cuencano* sensibility, rural residents are racialized as *indians* [backward, dumb, illiterate] or country bumpkins. Women, especially those who wear the *pollera*, have repeatedly told me how they are often treated in disrespectful ways by urban *Cuencanos* when they sell at the market or take care of personal business in the city. This kind of cultural racism was the

26 Letter to "Representatives of the Social Collectives of the parish of Victoria del Portete, Tarqui, Girón and the Province of Azuay," dated March 2nd, 2006. Oficio no. 236.

27 "Manifiesto a la Ciudadanía: Ni todo el oro del mundo vale una gota de agua," dated May 3rd, 2006.

subtext in a public smear campaign to undermine campesino allegations that IAMGOLD contaminated water resources. Cuenca's most widely read newspaper, *El Mercurio*, published a series of articles calling into question the legitimacy of farmer claims about the contamination. On the day of the protests, the newspaper reported that the water-board president had pressured protestors to participate in the action or else be fined. While water board leaders view the participation in anti-mining protests as part of a community obligation, within the context of Andean norms of reciprocity and collectivity, city people view these practices as expressions of an unruly and irrational power of "manipulative" caudillos or strongmen who run the water board to their benefit. The article defended the claims of IAMGOLD by stating that the water where the company was conducting its exploratory work was "very pure" and then becomes increasingly contaminated downstream by dairy pastures and human activities.²⁸

In a follow up article on May 6th, the newspaper reported that the laboratory from Cuenca's influential municipal water agency had established that levels of lead in the water were well below legal limits. The newspaper published the results. 80% of water samples showed lead results less than 10 micrograms per liter and the remaining 20% well below the 50 micrograms per liter limit established by law.²⁹ The following month the newspaper published another article to question campesino claims. According to the article, Cuenca's municipal environmental board found that IAMGOLD holds all the necessary permits and has met all obligations including having an Environmental License

²⁸ *El Mercurio*, "Paro contra IAMGOLD," May 4th, 2006.

²⁹ *El Mercurio*, "Desvirtúan contaminación del agua con plomo." May 6th, 2006.

and an Environmental Management Plan to continue exploratory work. In the article, the municipal environmental board reiterated that laboratory results demonstrate that the company has not contaminated the local river and that these results have been crosschecked with other laboratories.³⁰

Although to some farmers, the article showed evidence of a “natural” alliance between authorities and IAMGOLD, when I spoke to the Environmental Director at the municipal water agency, Janeth Leon, in 2009, this relationship seemed more complex when it came to individual perceptions. She was worried that multinational mining companies in the area may not have the adequate technology to safeguard the water supply, particularly during mining exploration, but suggested that it was “easier to regulate one company, rather than 200 [small scale miners],” that might invade the páramo where gold deposits were confirmed (see also Moore and Velásquez, forthcoming).

In May, IAMGOLD and authorities made one more attempt at diffusing conflict by proposing yet another environmental oversight committee with Macías’ participation. However, the issue of contamination remained unresolved for some people in Victoria del Portete as well as those from Tarqui, a neighboring parish who also drew their water from the Irquis River. On June 16th 2006, 300 campesinos from Victoria del Portete and Tarqui held a demonstration outside of DIREMI’s office in Cuenca. Farmers demanded to know what actions the Ministry of Energy and Mines had taken to control environmental impacts in Quimsacocha. In response to community protests, Mauricio

30 El Mercurio, “CGA” hace análisis de actividad minera,” June 21st, 2006.

Andrade emitted a letter the same day to the Undersecretary of Environmental Protection (UEP) in which he wrote; “It is evident that with all of the obstacles and delays, this case has not been given importance, which may lead to tragic consequences between community members and IAMGOLD.”³¹ He made an urgent call for the UEP, housed within the Ministry of Energy and Mines, to send a delegate to meet with the communities and explain the impacts of mining and the actions that the institution is undertaking to control environmental impacts of mining-related activities. Given the tense political atmosphere that was evident in May, the UEP in Quito ordered an inspection of IAMGOLD's concessions, overriding the earlier denial.³²

The inspection was conducted in early May and recommended that water samples be taken with community participation and sent to two different laboratories in order to crosscheck results. The laboratory results were processed by ETAPA and highlighted in the newspaper articles. But after a month and a half, the Undersecretary of Environmental Protection had not followed-up on the results with all community and water-board leaders thereby provoking the protest in front of DIREMI.

Two days after the DIREMI protest, a group of community members went to the páramo to do their own inspection of the mine site. They wanted to see for themselves what the company was doing. The entrance of the mine site was blocked by a large contingent of IAMGOLD supporters from San Gerardo. IAMGOLD representatives and local officials including then parish council president of Victoria del Portete Esteban

31 Memorandum No. 295-DIREMI-2006, dated June 16th, 2006.

32 Memorandum No. 177-DEREPA Azuay-2006, dated May 3rd, 2006.

Ortiz were present and, according to some, accompanying IAMGOLD in its trimester water testing. Arguments among the different actors present ensued. Confrontations at the páramo heightened anger and indignation among local residents. Some felt betrayed. They perceived that local authorities, who had initially supported the initial protest efforts, were now siding with IAMGOLD. However, according to Benjamin, it was never clear that Esteban Ortiz was dedicated to defend the community watershed. Benjamin believed that Ortiz only participated in community actions out of pressure to doing so. Ortiz' willingness to collaborate with IAMGOLD may have also been motivated by money. IAMGOLD's development and infrastructure programs were channeled through the various parish governments in the area.

A few days later, the farmers decided to take action. As I described at the beginning of this chapter, farmers held Ortiz captive and shut down the public functioning of the parish government office for approximately three years until new elections were held. Ortiz affirmed that he was participating in IAMGOLD's periodic water monitoring project which revealed that IAMGOLD was not contaminating the local water supply.³³ He pressed charges against 18 farmers for attempted murder.³⁴ In the following months, Ortiz and the rest of the parish council were forced to meet in secret but maintained their links to IAMGOLD. The Undersecretary of Environmental Protection (UEP), housed within the Ministry of Energy and Mines, sent its Environmental Management Unit (UAM, by its Spanish acronym)—created under the

33 El Mercurio, "Exigen renuncia de autoridad parroquial," June 20th, 2006.

34 El Mercurio, "Presidente de Junta Parroquial condena acción de secuestro," April 5th, 2007.

“green” neoliberal reforms— to mediate relationships with the company and opposition leaders.

On June 28th 2006, members of the water boards, environmental committees, and a local authority from Victoria del Portete and Tarqui met with the UAM. Opposition leaders once again denounced the Ministry of Energy and Mines and its environmental units, for the lack of accountability. They argued that Victoria del Portete has traditionally lived from dairy farming and that mining activity posed a threat to this form of livelihood. In fact, leaders from the opposition movement affirm that Victoria del Portete produces approximately 200,000 liters of milk per day, of which 25,000 liters are sold to Ecuador’s most important yogurt company, *Toni*.³⁵ The following day on June 29th, in a final effort to quell tensions, the company and state agreed to take another water sample the following day with opposition leaders.

The laboratory results were interpreted in different ways by the actors. Macías insisted that the results of the water samples showed an elevated presence of lead in the effluents of the Iruquis River where the second phase of IAMGOLDs exploratory work was being carried out. In a technical report that Macías prepared, he noted that the water samples show 200 micrograms of lead per liter of water.³⁶ In contrast, the UAM affirms that water used by IAMGOLD for its drilling activity did have some cloudiness and

35 Interview, Juan Carlos Serrano, March 25th, 2010 and Macías, Benjamín “Proyecto Minero Quimsacocha,” March 26th, 2007. Unpublished paper.

36 Macías, Benjamín “Proyecto Minero Quimsacocha,” March 26th, 2007. Unpublished paper.

turbidity but that through their water treatment process, the water quality would be restored to the permissible limits established by environmental legislation.³⁷

The different interpretations seem to point to the ambiguity in the lab results. The laboratory where the water samples were taken has a detection limit of 200 micrograms per liter of water. This means that the laboratory could only analyze lead levels above 200 micrograms per liter of water. The laboratory results established that the amount of lead in the water sample fell below 200 micrograms per liter, but because of its technical limitations, could not identify whether or not this was above or below 50 micrograms per liter limit established as safe for human consumption by Ecuadorian legislation.³⁸ Moreover, the laboratory report disclosed a 20% error margin for its lead tests. The ambiguity of these laboratory results stoked rather than settled any disputes over contamination.

For soil samples taken, the laboratory findings suggested that the samples did show an elevated presence of hydrocarbons and oil and grease levels (related to the operation of a water pump). The state interpreted these results to fall within the permissible limits for remediated soils. The state report suggested that this was a “temporary contamination” that “does not constitute any risks.”³⁹ The UAM did conclude that IAMGOLD should “avoid potential [soil contamination] by a strict adherence to the measures of prevention, control, and contingency.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, the UAM reported that

37 Memorandum No. 1963-DINAMI-UAM, dated July 19th 2006.

38 “Informe de ensayos No. 7628-C-02,” July 11th, 2006

39 Memorandum No. 1963-DINAMI-UAM, dated July 19th 2006.

40 Ibid.

it would coordinate the participation of affected communities in an oversight and environmental monitoring program to be established by IAMGOLD.

While “green” neoliberal reforms opened up nationally protected forests for mining extraction *and* expanded environmental regulations to regulate the various phases of mining activities, these regulatory agencies and procedures fall short of effectively dealing with community claims of contamination. In this case, dairy farmers were redirected back to company funded oversight programs as a way to resolve conflicts, which further animated the conflict. Shortly after the state emitted its report, Macías and other leader cut ties with UAM and IAMGOLD and radicalized their opposition movement against the mine.

EXPANDING CONNECTIONS AND CONSOLIDATING ALLIANCES

UAM and IAMGOLD did not succeed in establishing a broad-based community participation in an oversight committee. Julio Loza, the elderly dairy farmer, believed that IAMGOLD had paid off scientists and state representatives. In regard to farmers’ water studies, Loza says “everything was done right; it’s just that they took the company’s money.”⁴¹

Not all residents of Victoria del Portete agreed with Loza. By the beginning of 2007, Ortiz, who had been participating in IAMGOLD’s water testing program, signed an agreement with IAMGOLD in which the company promised to co-finance and provide

⁴¹ Interview, Julio Loza, August 30th, 2009.

technical assistance to carry out the parish's development plan.⁴² IAMGOLD community relations manager maintained that its role was to be simply "another citizen" by working with local authorities.⁴³ Yet, set within the context of the debates over the contamination, it appeared that IAMGOLD's community relations approach instantiated the authority of a severely questioned and embattled local institution, adding to the complexity of the conflicts.

Science enabled IAMGOLD to establish collaborations with local authorities as well as university scientists. During the course of the conflict, IAMGOLD signed a contract with a reputable scientific program housed in a public university to develop a baseline hydrology study. Joaquin Saldaña, director of a program on water and soil at the University of Cuenca, explained to me that the contract with IAMGOLD has enabled his research team to conduct an intensive investigation on páramo soils and water. With financing from IAMGOLD, his research team has placed more than thirty sensors to monitor fog, precipitation, water flow, variation in water ph., among many other hydrological aspects.⁴⁴ They have also discovered a two hundred year old polylepsis forest.

For Saldaña, IAMGOLD's funding has enabled his team to pay for expensive equipment needed to carry out scientific research on the páramo hydrology that the University of Cuenca, a public institution, would have otherwise never been able to afford. Such research has enabled his team to publish and present academic papers at

42 "Convenio de Cooperación Inter-institucional" Parish of Victoria del Portete and IAMGOLD, dated February 23rd, 2007.

43 Interview, Xavier Terán, November 29th, 2007.

44 Interview, Joaquin Saldaña, March 9th, 2009.

international conferences. Although some dairy farmers believe that IAMGOLD has ‘bought off’ his research team, he contended that IAMGOLD did not interfere with the publication of their scientific studies. In addition, he pointed out that his team has carefully chosen to use a laboratory that is able to detect permissible limits. “We are the first defenders of this water, if something should happen here, we will know first, we are the ones that are monitoring it.”⁴⁵

By the time of my arrival in the field in 2008, IAMGOLD had renewed its contract with the University of Cuenca and signed a contract with biologists from the University of Azuay to conduct a baseline biological study. The head biologist for the program spoke of the possibility of training rural residents in biological monitoring and of creating a university graduate program in environmentally sustainable mining techniques to develop mitigation practices that are adapted to the specific environmental contexts of the region.⁴⁶

As IAMGOLD’s use of science enabled connections with authorities and scientists, Macías, dairy farmers, and water board leaders continued to organize themselves against IAMGOLD and its exploration work. Unsatisfied with the way that the state handled the conflict, the groups began to organize protests. In November of 2006 they staged a road blockade that prevented *Victorienses* from voting in the second round of presidential elections protesting unwillingness of the provincial electoral tribunal to depose Esteban Ortiz from the presidency of the parish government.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Interview, January 20th, 2009.

By January of 2007, the farmers linked up with other mestizo and indigenous farmers across the country that also feared that mining development was going to threaten local natural resources. A three day meeting and a march was organized with the participation of urban intellectuals, health workers, social Catholics, and environmentalists. The meeting resulted in the formation of a national movement against large-scale metal mining called the National Coordinating Committee for the Defense of Life and Sovereignty (the *Coordinadora*). The final declaration read: “The people demand that the State and Government declare Ecuador free of large scale and open pit mining. This implies the declaration of all mining concessions as null and void [and] the immediate cessation of transnational mining companies and their subsidiaries.”⁴⁷ The establishment of the *Coordinadora* coincided with Correa’s first term in January 2007.

As a result of IAMGOLDs exploratory work, the company determined that a deposit of 3.2 million ounces of gold was situated within the small area between two effluents of the Irquis River.⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that when science is used in environmental conflicts, the challenge is not to determine whose science is right, but understand what science does. I have presented a case in which dairy farmers, IAMGOLD mining company, state

⁴⁷“Declaración del Encuentro de los pueblos por la vida,” January 2007.

⁴⁸ This initial estimate would drop to 2 million ounces of gold four years later: see IAMGOLD News Release, “Quimsacocha Gold Mine Development” Aug 7th 2008. This could be due to shifts in extraction. An open pit mine would yield higher gold recovery than subterranean mining methods that were later contemplated after the opposition movement gained force.

authorities, and parish authorities have disputed three different water quality studies. In doing so, I have demonstrated that science has worked as a ‘mediator,’ transforming and structuring a public debate over the effects of mining exploration on water resources. Scientific studies enabled collaborations and conflicts between and among the different actors to emerge with lasting consequences on the nature of community-corporate relationships. Most significantly, science enabled dairy farmers to jumpstart a local anti-mining movement and form part of a massive nation-wide political movement in to contest mining development, which demands that local communities be consulted before large-scale metal mining in community watersheds or lands take place.

IAMGOLD’s trimester water studies were the first set of water studies in question. Although these studies are legally mandated by law, they were deployed in such a way that effectively establishing positive relations between IAMGOLD, the local parish authorities in San Gerardo and in Victoria del Portete, and municipal authorities in Cuenca. Legally mandated studies became part of IAMGOLD’s broader CSR programs when it was used to establish collaboration and support with some community authorities. Moreover, IAMGOLD expanded its relations in the city of Cuenca by signing various contracts with scientists from a public and a private university. Thus corporations are comprised of a network of farmers, institutions, and scientists all brought together under CSR discourses and practices.

However, a small group of mid and large-scale dairy farmers used a second set of water studies that enabled these farmers to establish an unprecedented political alliance among a diverse set of farmers that vary across ethnicity and access to water, land, and

markets in opposition to IAMGOLD's activities. In contrast to IAMGOLD's trimester reports that established high levels of fecal contamination due to local dairy farming, the farmer's water study revealed lead contamination of their water sources. They attributed this increase in lead as an adverse effect of IAMGOLD's exploratory work. The second set of water studies shifted the nature of water contamination from fecal matter to lead contamination and the responsible party from dairy farmers to IAMGOLD. This set of studies also shifted the "work" of science from CSR to a political organizing tool.

A third set of studies were undertaken by the environmental unit within the Ministry of Energy and Mines. Dairy farmers staged protest to pressure state authorities to regulate and oversee IAMGOLD's exploratory work. By that time, it was evident that the relations between dairy farmers, parish authorities and IAMGOLD were beyond repair. Rather than resolve the question of contamination, the third set of studies stoked local controversies over whether or not IAMGOLD was responsible for lead contamination. The laboratory used to process the new set of water samples did not have the technical capacity to measure permissible limits of lead. The final report by the state stated that IAMGOLD was effectively treating water, while dairy farmers insisted that the studies revealed lead contamination.

Overall, this case demonstrates three key aspects of conflicts over "green" mining frameworks. First, water impacts are the primary way in which Andean farming communities dispute the extent to which a mining company lives up to its claims of sustainability and environmental protection.

Second, scientific studies which are part of “green” mining practices can be deployed in ways that extend our common notions of corporate social responsibility. They can be used as a springboard to secure a collaborative relationship with local communities in environmental oversight programs. Yet, even though scientific methods are often viewed as techniques belonging to the powerful, this chapter shows how the farmers appropriated these methods to challenge the meaning and practices of ‘sustainability’ central to IAMGOLD interventions and neoliberal state practices. Science enables actors to ‘visibilize’ certain elements over others and thereby transforming the debates over contamination and shifting political alliances.

Third, the “green” neoliberal legal reforms made to the mining law in 2000 expanded environmental regulatory agencies and measures but in a moment of conflict over contamination, these agencies animated rather than ameliorated local conflict. This could be due to a combination of internal questions (corruption, disputes within the organization) but certainly structural limitations seem to apply. World Bank financed mining reforms, which introduced “green” frameworks into the mining sector, placed the Ministry of Energy and Mines in the contradictory role as promoter and environmental regulator of mineral development, posing a conflict of interest. Moreover, authorities lacked the capacity to revoke mineral rights for environmental damages, thereby limiting their ability to sanction mining companies such as IAMGOLD.

Chapter 2: The Ironies of Post-Neoliberal Environmentalism⁴⁹

INTRODUCTION

One Sunday afternoon, I sat with Rosita in her single-room adobe home in San Pedro de las Escaleras. The roof was low and stuffed with newspapers to keep out the cold. Although I had only been in the field for a short time, Rosita was quick to share her generosity. She offered up hot tea and soft boiled eggs on my impromptu visit after church. At about 4 ft. 10 inches tall, Rosita was a firecracker. She was a fascinating mix of Catholic catechist and home-grown feminist who was quick to call out any and all injustices. “He divided us, Carlos Perez divided us. He went to negotiate our water with the state, and look where it got us? Look where it got us? Nowhere. I don’t trust him,” she said without any prompting on my part. It would sound as if she were talking about a neighbour—like Ortiz—who had ‘sold out’ the movement. But in fact, she was talking about one of the most prominent and visible anti-mining movement leaders in the community.

Upon my arrival in Victoria del Portete in early 2008, I had expected to find the divisions and antagonisms in the parish to be articulated between those who were for and against mining. Although these tensions did exist, the divisions among the local anti-mining movement seemed to be just as significant, if not more important. People were

⁴⁹ Portions of this chapter appear as: “Water for Gold: Confronting State and Corporate Mining Discourses in Azuay, Ecuador,” in *Subterranean Struggles: New Geographies of Extractive Industries in Latin America*, A. Bebbington and J. Bury (eds). Austin: University of Texas Press. (Forthcoming)

divided between two anti-mining groups with the shared goal of stopping mineral extraction but they mobilized different political discourses to carry out distinct political agendas.

On the one side, were those people who placed their loyalty with the Victoria-Tarqui water board, represented by Luis Morocho and Carlos Perez—acting lawyer to the community water board and president of UNAGUA. UNAGUA stands for the Unified Community Water Systems of Azuay. It provides political representation to community water systems across the Azuay Province. They had developed some connections with the regional indigenous movement and framed their political activism not against mining per se, but against mining in fragile environments like the páramo. They believed that natural resources should be in the hands of the community. On the other side, were those people like Rosita, who comprised the local chapter of the National Coordinating Committee for the Defense of Life and Sovereignty (*la Coordinadora*, by its popular name). Although the disputes over contamination led to the establishment of the *Coordinadora*—with the participation of the community water boards—by the time I arrived the organization was led by a group of Marxists who mobilized nationalist discourses to demand the cancelation of all mineral concessions and called for a revolution led by the *pueblo* (the people).

The divisions among the local anti-mining movement was reflective of the broader dilemma faced by the left in Ecuador with the election of President Correa. For instance, my former co-workers from the human rights organization that I worked with in 2000 were dispersed among different political groups when I arrived in Ecuador in 2007.

Some worked with popular movements, while others were state functionaries. National left politics was guided by a set of disarticulated visions, where some believed political actions should be used to put pressure on the state from the “outside” so to speak, while others believed that with a populist-socialist president in power, it was the time to work within the state structure.

This brings me to the second double-bind that my collaborators faced, and which resulted in their division: given that Correa was elected on an anti-neoliberal agenda, should anti-mining activists give the state a chance to resolve mining related conflicts, or is it wise to continue to work in an antagonist relation with the state? By working with the state, activists could test the promises of Correa’s administration that a progressive set of transformations were being carried out to recuperate national sovereignty. Or, activists could continue to exert pressure from the outside so as to hold the state responsible for its promises without risking possible cooptation of leadership or fragmentation.

In this chapter, I show how the local anti-mining movement faced this predicament when it staged its largest direct action protest. The response by the government—to select a group of community leaders to dialogue— resulted (rather expectedly) in divisions within the local anti-mining movement. The divisions were cemented by the outcome of the dialogues whereby Correa deepened “green” mining reforms that were initially developed under neoliberal policies and framed them as part of a new form of resource nationalism. Most surprising of all, is the way in which the fissures between the local groups opened up the opportunity for women to develop their own political organization and challenge long-standing sexism within the water board

organization and political leadership.

CORREA: FROM HOPE TO DISAPPOINTMENT

In 2006, Correa emerged as a figure that would resolve the growing dispute between the dairy farmers and IAMGOLD. Rosita remembers that Correa's sister came to Victoria del Portete to campaign for her brother on an anti-mining sentiment. She recalls:

“Pierina came to the parish and said—with hands in raised fists like this [Rosita raises two fists up in the air]—‘with all of this might, with all of this muscle we will defend [water], we will not let mining companies move forward (*dar un paso*).’ And we kept on believing, until the Tarqui protest.

Rosita referred the protests that began on June 5th, 2007 and were led by the newly established *Coordinadora*, which was at that time a broad based coalition of campesinos, environmental groups, and health-rights activists. Approximately 5,000 people from the southern coast, highlands and lowland Amazonian region participated. Not only were the Environmental Defense Committee for the Rio Irquis and the various community water-boards from Victoria del Portete and Tarqui active participants in the *Coordinadora*, they also acted as intermediaries between *Coordinadora* leadership and rural communities in Azuay.

Protestors demanded that the Correa administration declare the country free of large-scale mining, and place a moratorium on new mining concessions for fear that mining activities would either contaminate local drinking water or provoke a water shortage. With boulders, rocks, and burning tires, they shut down strategic points and

arteries of the Pan-American Highway, obstructing access to the cities of Loja and Guayaquil, as well as to the province of El Oro. Leaders from the southern Amazon that were pivotal to the *Coordinadora* leadership were able to tap into localized, place-based anti-mining struggles across the south and create a regional action.

This was not the first protest that the group staged against the Correa administration. At the beginning of 2007, the newly established *Coordinadora* staged a peaceful take-over of several government offices. As a result of the action, Correa promised to include the *Coordinadora* into a review process where the state and social movements would work together to annul mineral concessions. After follow-up letters to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the *Coordinadora* leaders did not receive a response. By May 2007, the group wrote a press release in which they recognized that there was an opening under the new government to listen to their demands, but they considered that there was a lack of political will on behalf of the government to make the rights of farmers prevail over the interests of multinational mining companies. They called attention to the two-faced nature of the state: as the government promised to review and annul mineral concessions that were causing problems across the country, the Ministry of Energy and Mines continued to approve applications for new mining concessions. The press release called for a nation-wide blockade to definitively suspend all mineral concessions and mining activity in the country.

At the 5,000 person road-blockade in June 2007, the protestors did not anticipate repression from the left-leaning government. To their surprise the police tear-gassed protestors in an attempt to disperse the crowd. Newspaper reports that there were several

people hurt in the skirmishes with the police and many others detained.⁵⁰ Far from mere victims, however, Rosita recalls that they took a policeman captive and negotiated the release of one of their *compañeros*.

After four days of road blockades, Minister of Energy and Mines Alberto Acosta, a former advisor to the national indigenous organization CONAIE, visited the focal point of the uprising in Tarqui to smooth over political tensions that could undermine the newly installed government. An advocate of indigenous collective rights, Acosta sympathized with protesters, stating that he “shares their demands because there are more than 4,000 mining concessions that were given without regard for legal or constitutional frameworks.”⁵¹ He proposed the formation of a high-level commission to gather evidence about mining concessions such as IAMGOLD’s with the possibility of reverting them back to the state. Openly critical of large-scale, open-pit mining, he also proposed that an emergency decree be emitted to review the mining law and that a national referendum be held over mining.⁵²

At the cost of breaking with skeptical *Coordinadora* members, leaders from the Victoria-Tarqui community drinking water board as well as a couple of the small community-managed irrigation boards chose to represent themselves through Carlos Perez. Carlos was not only the UNAGUA president but was from a dairy farming family in Tarqui and a trusted community figure. The community water systems opted for state

50 El Comercio, “Minería: protestas en tres provincias,” June 6th, 2007.

51 El Comercio, June 9th, 2007 “Las ofertas del Ministro Acosta no convencen.” Original quote in newspaper article reads: “El ministro Acosta dijo que comparte el reclamo, porque existen más de 4 000 concesiones entregadas sin respetar los marcos jurídicos y las disposiciones constitucionales.”

52 Ibid.

engagement. Perez and others disagreed with the direction of the other *Coordinadora* leaders who wanted to maintain a road blockade. In their analysis of the rise of the *Coordinadora* and the anti-mining movement, Latorre and Santanilla (2009) note that there were few internal discussions over strategy and direction of the organization, which enabled the two Maoist influenced leaders from the *Coordinadora Campesina Popular* to dominate its leadership and direction. *Coordinadora* leadership did not believe that the ‘bourgeoisie state’ would protect the rights of campesinos and gave the Correa administration fifteen days to suspend concessions, threatening to return to the street on June 26th.

Benjamín Macías, then President of the Environmental Defense Committee for the Iruquis River who had led the scientific studies in the previous year, sided with the *Cordinadora*. He explains, “We knew that it was a show. We had had two or three [previous] conversations with Acosta and it was like a media campaign: that the Constituent Assembly is coming [and it will resolve all the problems in the mining sector].”⁵³ But, water board leaders were still hopeful about Correa’s campaign promises. Luis Morocho, former President of the Victoria-Tarqui community water board and affiliate of UNAGUA, recalls that during his presidential campaign Correa had visited Cuenca and declared, “[If] I come to power, mining companies will leave the country.”⁵⁴ So, at the expense of movement solidarity and betting on presidential

53 Interview Manuel MalDoñado, May 24th, 2009. Original quote reads: “Porque ya sabíamos el montaje que había hecho. ya teníamos unos dos, tres acercamientos con Alberto Acosta, posteriormente con el gobierno... Siempre era la campaña mediática. que la constituyente viene... y ellos iban a regular.”

54 Interview, Rogelio Pauta, March 22nd, 2009. Original quote reads: “El [Correa] dijo, ‘compañeros yo entro en el poder, se van las mineras del país. No las mineras no entraran.’”

authority to resolve their conflict with IAMGOLD, water board leaders agreed to meet the President in Quito in early July.

During the meeting with UNAGUA, Correa affirmed that he would suspend IAMGOLD's concessions but that he needed proof that they overlapped with community water supplies and were obtained inappropriately. Without grounds for the suspension, he anticipated that IAMGOLD "will bring a tremendous lawsuit against us, and will bankrupt the country."⁵⁵ Prior to any suspension, he also urged campesinos to avoid street protests, warning, "be wary of feeling desperate or of wanting a quick solution."⁵⁶ Street blockades, he indicated, would only "harm a government that's on your side."⁵⁷ President Correa also took the opportunity to discourage any further collaboration between the water board and the Marxist leaders of the *Coordinadora*. Correa called them, an "extremely infantile" group of radicals.⁵⁸ Worried that any demonstration of political opposition would jeopardize his party's success in upcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly, he cautioned water board leaders, "Be careful not to be manipulated by people who have nothing better to do, like the National Coordinating Committee for Life [and Sovereignty]. Those people do great harm through their radicalism"⁵⁹ It came as no surprise then that *Coordinadora* leadership and members

55 Recording from Meeting with President Correa, July 4th, 2007. Original quote reads: Qué pasa si se suspende IAMGOLD, y me muestra que si tiene estudio ambiental, que si hay consulta previa...y nos ponen tremenda demanda y quiebra el país.

56 Ibid. Original quote reads "cuidado por esa desesperación de remediar las cosas ya, rápida..."

57 Ibid. Original quote reads "...perjudican un gobierno que está a su lado."

58 Recording from Meeting with President Correa, June 2007.

59 Ibid. Original quote: "Cuidado no nos dejemos manejar por tipos que no tienen nada que hacer como la Coordinadora Nacional para la Defensa de la Vida. Esa gente hace mucho daño con ese radicalismo, yo le diría, extremadamente infantil."

would later become targets of state repression. Correa further encouraged leaders to follow institutional channels to remedy the conflicts. By the end of the meeting, Correa proposed to form a tripartite commission to review legal and environmental aspects of IAMGOLD's holdings whose concessions, he said, he would not hesitate to revoke should they find supporting evidence for legal violations.

UNAUGUA, now representing the Victoria-Tarqui water board system as well as some irrigation systems viewed the commission as an opportunity to legitimate their protests in defense of water. They participated on the grounds that they would not meet with IAMGOLD and deal only with the government. "Our struggle is not irrational," explained Carlos Pérez.⁶⁰ "We are not violent as the mining companies paint us...we accepted the government's proposal to demonstrate [legally] that the communities are in the right and that the government made the mistake, for which it has to respond."⁶¹ Participation in this commission also meant that the communities could test the new-left government to see how far it was willing to go to confront multinational companies and uphold some form of justice in relationship to natural resource struggles.

Less than a week after the tripartite commission was set up, a much smaller and debilitated group of mining opponents returned to the street. Governor of the province of Azuay Oswaldo Larriva made a public pronouncement that the demonstration should be

60 Interview, Carlos Pérez, July 17th, 2008. Original Quote reads: "...no es nuestro interés la defensa loca."

61 Ibid. Original quote reads: No somos violentos como muchos de las empresas mineras nos pintan...sino, recogemos la propuesta del gobierno de formar parte la comisión, y ahí vis-a-vis, frente a frente con los documentos evidenciar donde estar las violaciones y probar que estuvo mal. La falla no es de la comunidades, la falla es el ejecutivo. Y el ejecutivo tendrá que dar su respuesta al país de porque ellos fallaron."

brought to end, but “with respect for the human rights of protesters.”⁶² Disregarding the Governor’s call, police repression was reported to be brutal and violent.⁶³ Participant accounts suggest that police overwhelmed protesters not only in numbers, but also with tear gas and anti-riot vehicles.⁶⁴ According to one report, police threw tear gas in homes, nearly asphyxiating children inside.⁶⁵ Rosita, now sided with the *Coordinadora*, remembers that the tear gas hung heavy over the valley, just like fog.⁶⁶ Over thirty-three men and women, across four provinces were detained and charged with closure of public roads.⁶⁷ Dozens were reportedly injured. Repression with force had not been anticipated particularly under the newly installed nationalist government.

Mobilizing legal knowledge

After a month of intensive research, Carlos Pérez and Hernan Loyola, the president of the largest community drinking water system of Baños (a parish adjacent to Victoria del Portete, and whose watershed is also found in the páramo) found what they were looking for. They discovered that IAMGOLD had violated three bodies of law: the 2001 Mining Law, the Environmental Regulation [Reglamento Ambiental] and the 1998 Political Constitution.⁶⁸ The first two violations relate to IAMGOLD’s lack of permission to conduct exploratory work neither near headwaters nor in the Yanuncay-Irquis

62 El Mercurio, “Vías del Austro están nuevamente bloqueadas,” June 26th, 2007.

63 Moore, Jennifer, July 5, 2007, “Defending Life and Sovereignty,” in *The Dominion*.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Interview, Rosita Zhingri, May 28th 2009

67 Constituent Assembly, “Informe Definitivo de Mayoría sobre Amnistías a Personas Involucradas en Hechos Acaecidos en el Cantón Chillanes, Provincia de Bolívar; en el Paro Nacional Minero y Casos de Criminalización por Defender la Territorialidad, Derechos Colectivos y de los Pueblos,” July 11th, 2008

68 Pérez, Carlos and Loyola, Hernán, “Informe de la Comisión designada por el Señor Presidente de la Republica para el análisis y revisión de las concesiones mineras en el Azuay,” August 30th, 2007.

Protected Forest, to which the Quimsacocha páramo belongs. Both circumstances require special permits before mining titles can be granted. In the first case, Pérez and Loyola found no record that the company had petitioned the National Council of Hydrological Resources for permission to obtain mining titles in areas that would endanger highland lakes and rivers destined for domestic water use, as required by article 11 of the mining law.⁶⁹

In the second case, they allege that IAMGOLD did not fully follow article 19 of the environmental regulation for mining activities, which requires mining companies to submit a Preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment (PEIA) and an Environmental Management Plan to an inter-ministerial commission responsible for approving concession titles in protected areas for forests and vegetation. The requirements were a part of the “green” mining reforms discussed in the earlier chapter. Though IAMGOLD did submit a PEIA, the company did not receive complete approval from the inter-ministerial commission.⁷⁰ This was overlooked by the UAM’s environmental audit in 2006, as explained in the previous chapter. On this basis, the legal investigation purports that the National Mining Director’s Regional Office violated proper procedure when it approved IAMGOLD’s concession titles.⁷¹ Once again, it appeared that the “green” mining bureaucracy implemented fell short of fully implementing institutional checks and balances.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid

The report also found IAMGOLD to be in violation of Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization and article 84 of the 1998 Political Constitution that guarantees communities the right to be consulted before commencement of any prospecting or exploration of non-renewable resources that may affect their environment or culture.⁷² Pérez and Loyola determined that instead of conducting a community-wide consultation, IAMGOLD developed “economic agreements with state functionaries such as mayors, presidents of the local parish government or university rectors, which are not communities, but are instead public officials.”⁷³ Pérez and Loyola attached over fifty-seven notarized testimonies to their report from water board leaders, with thousands of signatures from water users attesting to the fact that they had not been consulted regarding IAMGOLD’s exploration plans.

Concurrently, officials from the Ministry of Energy and Mines and the Undersecretary of Environment conducted an investigation to verify campesino claims that IAMGOLD’s plans for the future gold mine would adversely affect water resources in the páramo. The Ministry of Energy and Mines’ report affirms the presence of “a páramo system that is very important.”⁷⁴ This ecosystem provides hydrological services

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. Original quote: “..vía suscripción de convenios económicos, por parte de funcionarios estatales como alcaldes, presidentes de juntas parroquiales o rectores de universidades, ellos no son comunidad, son autoridades o funcionarios públicos.”

⁷⁴ For a recent declaration on the importance of the páramo ecosystem, see the 2009 Loja Declaration from the 2nd World Congress on Páramo, June 21nd-25th, 2009, Ecuador. Specifically, recommendation number ten of the declaration states: “In the interest of the common good, mining should be excluded from the páramo in all of its forms taking into considering the context, legal framework and sovereignty of each country.”; http://www.infoandina.org/apc-aa-files/c3dfc64f016713810688d61d9e4928ce/Declaracion_de_Loja_sobre_los_Paramos_2009.pdf

that guarantee water quality and quantity.”⁷⁵ It continues, “We observed nine important bodies of water that could be affected by future extractive activities.”⁷⁶ In other words, the inspection verified that mining activity could compromise both rural and urban water supplies.

Although all parties agreed that mining activity could jeopardize important water resources, their conclusions differed. On one the hand, Pérez and Loyola concluded that IAMGOLD’s two main concessions, Río Falso and Cerro Casco, should be annulled. On the other hand, although the MEM acknowledged the importance of hydrological resources in the area to downstream communities, they recommended that IAMGOLD renounce only 3,000 hectares of its concessions that would conserve water resources serving the city of Cuenca. The report did not mention IAMGOLD’s lack of permits from the National Council on Hydrological Resources nor did it provide maps or data to substantiate why certain areas rather than others should be prioritized for protection.

Rethinking Resource Sovereignty

Perez and Loyola handed the report over to the Governor of Azuay, and the Undersecretary of Mines who were delegated to sign the report. However, the two authorities did not sign it. As days passed, they did not hear back from authorities and started to worry. The Undersecretary of Mines, Jose Serrano (who previously worked as an indigenous rights lawyer against oil development in the Amazon) tried to calm their

75 MEM, “Resumen del Informe Proyecto Quimsacocha IAMGOLD Ecuador S.A.” November 14th, 2007. Original quote reads: “existe un sistema lacustre de páramo muy importante ya que este ecosistema ofrece servicios hidrológicos que garantizan la calidad y cantidad de agua.”

76 Ibid. Original quote reads: “Se observa cerca que cerca de nueve cuerpos importantes de agua podrían ser afectados por eventuales actividades de explotación.”

anxieties. Perez remembers that Serrano had told him, “The report was very good, very good research. The revocation is just a question of time.”⁷⁷ After waiting for months, the Undersecretary Serrano called Perez and water board leaders for a final meeting in Quito to announce the results. Perez recalls that Serrano assured him that that the decision was “favorable” to the communities, but wouldn’t reveal any details over the phone.⁷⁸

On November 14th 2007, the water board leaders were called to Quito to meet with functionaries of the Ministry of Energy and Mines. The MEM announced that the state would oblige IAMGOLD to cede 3,220 hectares in mining concessions to the state for the conservation of lakes and community water supplies. The MEM called this a first step and said it would continue investigations toward conservation of further water resources in the area.⁷⁹ ETAPA, Cuenca’s municipal water company was charged with conservation of the 3,220 hectares. An ETAPA official called the announcement “an unprecedented decision.”⁸⁰ But, water board leaders gave the announcement a decidedly different epithet. “It was a farce,” says Luis Morocho, “a lie.”⁸¹ The landmark decision left water-board leaders feeling deceived and betrayed.

The 3,220 hectares would not protect important effluents of the Irquis and Tarqui rivers that supply about two thousand families from Victoria del Portete and Tarqui with irrigation and drinking water and that coincide with confirmed gold deposits. Instead,

77 Carlos Perez, Interview, July 17th, 2008.

78 Ibid.

79 El Mercurio, “Declaran zona de restricción minera” January 10th, 2008.

80 Ibid. Original quote reads: “fue calificada por el funcionario [de ETAPA] como un “hecho sin precedentes.””

81 Interview, Rogelio Pauta, March 22nd, 2009. Original Quote: “los 3,220 hectáreas fue una farsa, una mentira.”

they pertain to a watershed serving the city of Cuenca and the suburban parish of Baños where mineralization is not believed to exist. [See Figure 3]. The decision reinforced asymmetrical relations between the city and countryside that have marked Victoria del Portete and Tarqui's relationship to Cuenca for decades by protecting the city's water supply but not the countryside's. The incident "indisputably generated total distrust" of the President, says Carlos Pérez.⁸² Such distrust, however, was only among community members and activists. More widely, in Cuenca and beyond, the decision (though a loss for water board leaders) would generate support for the government and IAMGOLD alike from municipal officials among others.

For state authorities, the declaration was evidence of revolutionary changes taking place. In January 2008, during a public ceremony to sign over the area to ETAPA, then Minister of Mines and Petroleum Galo Chiriboga (Acosta had resigned from the post) stated that the agreement marked a "before" and an "after."⁸³ Without referring to irregularities found in the granting of IAMGOLD's concessions, he described, "A before full of corruption and decisions absolutely contrary to community interests," in contrast to an "after" in which the state has "rescued water resources, which are the right of all people, from the hands of a private company."⁸⁴ Chiriboga added, "Correa's government of the Citizen's Revolution could not allow that a strategic good of this kind be

82 Interview, Manuel MalDoñado, July 17th, 2008. original quote: "“Esas experiencias llenas de enormes frustraciones, decepción....la palabra de él es la ley...eso indiscutiblemente crea total desconfianza.”"

83 El Mercurio, "Ministro marca un antes y un después," January 10th, 2008. Original quote reads: Hoy marcamos un antes y un después en materia minera: un antes lleno de corrupción, de decisiones absolutamente contrarias a los intereses de nuestras comunidades, Hemos recatado de las manos privadas de una organización empresarial el agua que es el derecho de todo su pueblo, de toda su comunidad."

84 Ibid.

maintained in the hands of a private company.”⁸⁵ In this way, the government distanced itself from the neoliberalism of the past and positioned itself as defenders of water and rural communities.

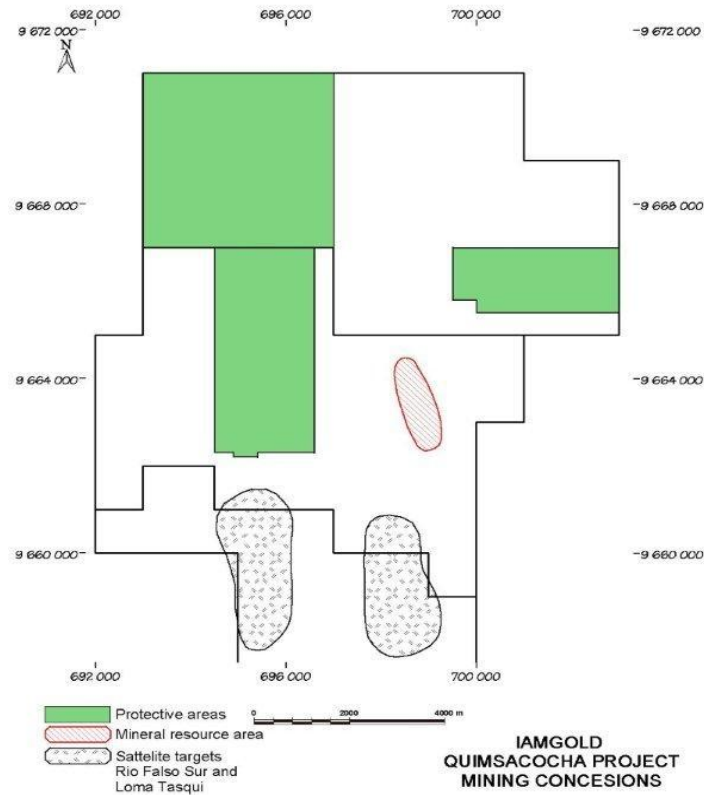


Figure 2: IAMGOLD’s map of the 3,220 hectares protected area.⁸⁶ Ironically, the map works as a visual tool for both the company who is assuaging investors that the Correa’s decision will not jeopardize the gold mine project and for activists and allies pointing out the limits to Correa’s “green” mining reforms.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Source: “IAMGOLD reaches agreement on environmental protection in Ecuador,” November 15, 2007, IAMGOLD Corporation.

Even as the state represented itself as a revolutionary force going against corporate power, the proposal itself did very little to democratize water resource administration in the area. The state had developed a relationship with water-board leaders, but the mechanisms for water conservation did not contemplate the participation of community leaders or their watersheds. The proposal entrusted the powerful municipal water company with the conservation of this area. This was in part due to the fact that the area in question was already earmarked for water for the city. The decision of the state to make ETAPA the trustee of the 3,220 hectares implied that it would be difficult for community activists to reassert any rights over the wetlands. The 3,220 hectares overlap with collective grazing land that dates back to the late 1800s in Quimsacocha. While they have come into disuse with changes in agricultural patterns, to entrust them to ETAPA under so-called revolutionary language was to promote a form of national sovereignty that reinforces state authority over what water board leaders like Carlos Perez would later start to call ancestral lands.

Moreover, state interventions that made alliances with ETAPA carried symbolic weight. The 3,220 hectare decision was the first time the Correa administration took a step against multinational mining companies. Wetlands have not historically carried symbolic meaning in the national imaginary, however, with an increase in activism around watersheds and wetlands the páramos have come to stand in for life—the material and cultural reproduction of Andean communities situated within a longer history of water struggles. In transferring authority and rights over wetlands to authorities in

Cuenca, the state transferred sovereign power over life to urban technocrats. By aligning itself with powerful institutions in Cuenca over community water boards, the nation as it is being constructed through these practices comes to be associated with everything that Cuenca as a city stands for: a white, urban, and lettered city. In other words, new forms of nationalism based on state sovereignty over natural resources upheld dominant racial and spatial hierarchies that naturalized the unequal urban/rural divide (see also Martinez 2010).

As for IAMGOLD, the company claims that it was part of the decision-making process. The company emitted a press release to celebrate itself as a socially and environmentally conscious corporation. “Giving back the small portion of our concessions was done to send a clear message,” stated IAMGOLD President and CEO Joseph Conway, “IAMGOLD is committed to preserve and protect the environment. It was the right thing to do.”⁸⁷ The press release, published one day after the government announcement, mentioned that the area flagged for conservation would safeguard the water supply of surrounding communities. It also assuaged investor fears that the decision would impact upon future profits, “The land contains no prospects and will in no way affect the eventual operation there.”⁸⁸ The company further asserted that the area was never destined for mining, “We had determined, by our own initiative, that the area be a natural reserve,” said the leader of IAMGOLD’s community relations team, noting

87 IAMGOLD Press Release. November 15th, 2007, “IAMGOLD reaches agreement on environmental protection in Ecuador.

88 Ibid.

that they were “establishing a scientific monitoring station in the area.”⁸⁹ Yet, my conversations with a journalist covering the story for Reuters suggest otherwise. On the morning that the state announced the plan, he couldn’t reach IAMGOLD representatives for a statement and theorizes that the company didn’t know about the conservation scheme before hand and was busy crafting a public response. If this is indeed accurate, it implies that the relationships between the state and IAMGOLD were also strained by the decision. These tensions would be missed by merely reading the 3220 as a ‘sell out’ from the Correa administration.

Overall, the symbolic conservation of water resources in the páramo upheld an image and practice of a “revolutionary” state while furthering the notion that large-scale mining is compatible with environmental conservation.⁹⁰ I call this post-neoliberal environmentalism, whereby green neoliberal frameworks are re-contextualized and made compatible with a ‘revolutionary’ state project to increase its control over natural resource. The decision worked in favor of IAMGOLD who was able to represent itself as a ‘responsible’ mining company, a corporate oxymoron, in *sensu* Benson and Kirsch (2010), in which “idioms of ethics, health and environmentalism and corporate responsibility conceal the contradictions of capitalism” in attempts to manage and neutralize critique of their practices.

By turning the conservation of the páramo into a media spectacle, the state deflected attention away from the UNAGUA study that alleged that IAMGOLD acted

89 Interview, IAMGOLD Community Relations Manager, November 29th, 2007.

90 I refer to the 3,220 hectares as a “symbolic” conservation of water resources because at the time that this chapter was written, the state had yet to hand over the land titles to ETAPA for conservation.

irresponsibly in a context in which legal and democratic procedures had been violated. Thus, while the state *appeared* to respond to campesino concerns, *in practice* the 3,220 hectares conceded did not address the risk that campesino water resources might be contaminated nor respond to the evidence that IAMGOLD had gained title to its concessions inappropriately.

STATE EFFECTS

In early December 2007, just a few weeks after the MEM announced the conservation scheme, President Rafael Correa made public his support for large-scale open-pit mining. “We wanted to avoid this at first, but if there are \$100 billion dollars [in minerals in the ground], then we will have to permit open-pit mining.”⁹¹ Correa said that the profits could be used to finance social development projects for Ecuadorians and to put an “end to poverty.”⁹² What Correa was proposing was similar to what Eduardo Gudynas calls “progressive extractivism,” in which the state plays a greater role in developing resource extraction, and gains legitimacy for these activities by investing profits into social spending (Gudynas 2010). During the same speech, Correa gave his support to a project belonging to Corriente Resources in Morona Santiago, which had been previously suspended for human rights violations. Correa’s statement ushered in a

91 Soto, Alonso, “Ecuador permitirá minería a cielo abierto si recibe beneficios,” Reuters, December 2007. Original Quote: “En principio queremos evitar eso, pero si ha y 100.000 millones de dólares vamos a tener que permitir esa minería (a cielo) abierto,”

92 El Comercio, December 3, 2007, Correa Apuesta por la minería para fomentar el desarrollo.” original quote: “Si hay esos ingresos se va a tener que permitir que esa minería vaya en beneficio del desarrollo del pueblo ecuatoriano”

year-long media campaign for legislative changes to national mining policy. This is discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

In January 2008, when I arrived to conduct fieldwork in Cuenca, the possibility of recreating a unified anti-mining movement in Azuay looked hopelessly grim. The 3,200-hectare fiasco left local groups divided. Although water board leaders had rejected the 3,200 hectares and had little direct role in its formulation, *Coordinadora* affiliates blamed the decision on water board leaders. “There was already distancing” says Benjamin who was an active *Coordinadora* leader at the time. But with the decision to set aside 3,200 hectares, “there was much more distance.”⁹³ He believes that there was a hidden agenda by the state and that the state “used” Carlos Perez and Loyola.”⁹⁴ Julia also agreed with Federico’s conspiracy theory. She was a mestiza urban feminist activist, *Coordinadora* advisor, and member of the Popular Democratic Movement Party (MPD, the Marxist Party). The “3,200 hectares was totally deceptive, they [the state] wanted to deceive the people. The people are humble but they are not stupid.” Activists widely interpreted the dialogue forum as a “divide and conquer” strategy.

After July 2007, *Coordinadora* leaders organized the “Dialogue for Life” meetings across the country to encourage campesinos to affiliate with their organization. In these forums, people share the experiences of their specific struggle against mining development and expressed their opposition to mining on nationalist terms. By nationalist terms, I mean that they drew comparisons between mining extraction and the

93 Interview, Benjamin Macias, May 24th, 2009.

94 Ibid

recolonization of the country but this time instead of Spaniards, it was North American mining companies that were looking to extract the country's mineral wealth. They had members in Gualaquiza, Tungurahua, Molleturo, Santa Isabel, Jima, Chimborazo, and Intag, all of who organized in protection of specific rivers, mountains, or forests threatened by mining extraction. The *Coordinadora* continued to oppose dialogue with the state and opted to hold more street-blockades to meet their objective—to declare Ecuador as a country free of large-scale mining in the National Constitution that would be rewritten in 2008.

The second faction, as I briefly mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, was comprised of the Victoria-Tarqui water board leaders and some of their water users. The majority, but not all, were subaltern mestizos with some indigenous ancestry. Through UNAGUA, the water boards established political ties with FRESMIGE (the Southern Resistance Front against Large Scale mining). Salvador Quishpe, an indigenous leader from the eastern lowland province of Zamora Chinchipe and former congressman for the Pachakutik party founded FRESMIGE. The water boards and FRESMIGE also had brief collaborations with CONAIE. The three organized political meetings together and lobbied the National Constituent Assembly on a joint platform for the recognition of a plurinational state. Moreover, FRESMIGE and the water boards advocated the National Constituent Assembly for the creation of “protection zones” that would map out areas that would be excluded from mining development such as páramos and indigenous territories. At the time, CONAIE did not publically oppose mining development; there

was talk within the organization of having indigenous organizations and communities manage small-scale mining operations.

In other words, the 3,320 hectare decision had the effect of dividing local organizations and shifted their activism away from IAMGOLD and the president and towards the National Constituent Assembly to develop a national policy that challenged or at least limited mineral extraction in the country. In the following chapter, I follow *Coordinadora* activism around the Constituent Assembly for anti-mining legislation.

WOMEN'S ORGANIZING: RETHINKING STATE EFFECTS

Movement divisions cemented by the state dialogue processes are not anything new in Latin America. In fact, the 3220 hectare protection zone sounds much like reforms made under neoliberalism that meet a portion of indigenous peoples' demands, without coming to terms with the most substantive portions of their demands (e.g. Hale 2002, 2004). But, the story in this case doesn't end in division. Ironically, the divisions opened an opportunity to strengthen and empower of women's organizing affiliated with the *Coordinadora*. For some of the campesina women, the decision made by male water board leaders to engage in state dialogue revealed a pernicious sexism within local political and social structures. The sexism sparked the emergence of a gender critique within the movement, which led the women to establish connections with other women, transforming their own political discourses and practices. Moreover, campesina women established a regional women's organization: the Defensoras de la Pachamama, and ultimately became more empowered political subjects. They were able to simultaneously

challenge gendered power relations in the movement and expand community-based resource activism. *Coordinadora* leader Lina Solano played a crucial role in creating a gender consciousness among the women. She facilitated connections with other campesina women and the establishment of a regional women's organization. This process was already underway during my arrival.

Gender Critique

Through my collaboration with the *Coordinadora's* women's group, I participated in a variety of their activities and established close relations with some of the women early on in my fieldwork. One day, I sat down with Doña Rosita, Doña Berta and her daughter Mari to talk about the history of their activism. The June 2007 protests were key turning points for the three of them. They recounted the events that happened with the 3,220 hectares. Although the story of the divisions had become familiar to me, I had understood them as merely political-ideological splits. As I described above, I understood the divisions to be a dispute between two groups with distinct political formations which led one to view state dialogue as a viable option and another that radically opposed the idea (see also Latorre and Santanilla 2009). But, in the interview Rosita, Berta, and Mari offered an alternative explanation that underscores unequal gender power relations in the community water board system.

Rosita recounted to me the second round of protests in July 2007 when the water-boards decided to go dialogue while a smaller group staged another road blockade. She said, "Luis and the rest of the water users didn't go out, it was just us women alone. He

went on *Voz de Tomebamba* (Cuenca's most popular radio station) telling people, 'no, no don't go out to the road blockade' because there was an agreement with the government." Mari chimed in, "that's when we became divided and now we are with the coordinator," referring to Lina Solano. Rosita continued and commented that Carlos—in deciding unilaterally to engage in state dialogues—wanted to "be big. Like Herod."

As I mentioned earlier, Rosita was a catechist and viewed Luis' transgressions through the moral prism of the Catholic doctrine. Luis violated a moral principal by placing his own individual desires for political authority and power over the desires of the community. Rosita and Mari accused Luis of *protagonismo*—when someone asserts their own agenda over community wills and norms (Speed 2008). Rosita and Mari's lack of voice and authority in the moment of deciding whether the community should participate in state dialogue draws attention to the unequal gender relations of power in collective resource politics.

Rosita then recounted how the limits of the state's conservation scheme led to confrontations between her and the male-dominated water board leadership. She recounted the events that unfolded immediately after leaders had gone to Quito to meet with the president. "Don Guillermo, Dr. Perez, Loyola, and the Governor took the 6 o'clock flight back [to Cuenca]. They came back and Benjamin says to Don Guillermo 'what have you done? This is not ours!'"⁹⁵ He pointed out that the map with the 3,200 hectares did not include the Quinhuahauycu—the headwaters of the Rio Irquis. Apparently, the water board leaders did not realize that the 3,200 hectares did not meet

⁹⁵ Interview with Rosita Zhingri, May 28th, 2009.

their demands to protect their watershed from mining until after they had travelled back to Cuenca and met with the rest of the water-users and leaders. Carlos admitted that the conservation plan was announced publically and in the midst of flashing cameras and speeches he did not have time to carefully check the map and the location of the protected area.

Rosita continued, “I yelled at Don Guillermo and he called me stupid. He said, ‘I’m going to slap you with a lawsuit in front of everyone.’ They call Lina violent and they call us sheep for following her. But what did they do? We gained nothing with the 3,200 hectares. They say that Carlos is educated, but if he is so educated why doesn’t he defend us?”

Rosita critiqued Carlos for not doing his job as a water-board leader; a gendered role in which men defend water and by extension, they defend women’s interests. Women are particularly vulnerable in water politics. Although women’s roles are traditionally tied to taking care of small animals and dairy cows which require access to water, very rarely are they able to gain a position as a leader in water board systems. The water board system is a domain that belongs almost exclusively to men. Gender asymmetry in the organization and functioning of Andean water board systems are documented by scholars in other places (see Bennett et al. 2005; Deere and Leone 1997; Gelles 2000). And, according to campesina women, this hold true in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui. Doña Beatriz confirmed that women in general would never be elected as a water board director: “they are men, they are educated...we are just *sencillas*, [with little schooling].” Men with cultural capital, such as high education levels, tend to be elected

as leaders of community water systems. And, because community water board leaders plays a role in directing community activism against mining development, unequal gender power relations present within the water board systems can be reproduced in community resource politics.

“Knowing” mining’s effects

Beatriz, Rosita and Mari’s awareness of their exclusion as decision-makers in water board politics is the reason for their involvement in the women’s organization as well as an outcome of the political education opportunities afforded to them through the *Coordinadora*. Lina Solano, head of the *Coordinadora* organized a variety of education workshops on diverse topic such as health and mining impacts; international women’s day; and agro-ecology. Moreover, she has organized trips to Cajamarca, Peru—where mining’s socio-environmental impacts are most visible—and procures videos and pamphlets from other mining struggles. Since I started my fieldwork, she has organized an annual International Women’s Leadership Conference that brings together mestiza and indigenous women activist from anti-mining struggles in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela, and Guatemala among other countries. Educational opportunities create the opportunity for campesina women to develop their own critiques of mining extraction and organize independently from men.

Mari, Beatriz and Rosita, told me why they oppose mining development during our interview and cited some of the things they learned from the women in other mining struggles. Again, I turn to Rosita. In the interview I conducted she tells me about her

conversation with a woman from Peru that she met during the International Women's Conference. "They say that we might be old but that we don't look it, that we are healthy. In turn, they from Peru, say that they are young, but with what faces, with what skin. They say go see our kids, and see how they look. Everyone looks old and worn. Their land isn't good for anything...the dirt doesn't produce anymore. In turn, here we have milk, we have meat, cheese....corn, beans...everything that we sow grows. But, later [with mining] we won't be able to sow anything...this is why we are worried," says Rosita.

Doña Beatriz shared the same concern. "I was reading the pamphlets from Bolivia, and it says that at the beginning they [mining company] paid them [farming community] monthly, and then surely, when the earth didn't produce any more, the mining company had to pay them more and more until they couldn't pay them more, and they told them, 'here take this liquidation so that you leave this.' This is not what we want. Here it will be the same thing. That is why we firmly stand in struggle against the mining companies" [en pie de lucha].

Doña Rosita draws on Andean women's experiences to develop a gendered critique of mining development. Farming women are uniquely positioned within agrarian economies. While men have opportunities to work in the coast or in Cuenca, women's domestic roles are tied to tending dairy cows and subsistence garden plots. In Southern Ecuador, with high levels of migration, many households—such as Doña Rosita's and Doña Elsa's—are female-headed households and rely on earnings from dairy farming to finance primary living expenses. They have the added role of caring for the children of

their siblings and relatives who have migrated to the US or Spain. Connections made with other women, have helped farming women in Ecuador develop a powerful narrative of opposition to mining development based on their traditional gender roles. Their gender roles, closely tied to caring for land, animals, and children means that they are likely to be the first to experience mining's impacts, even if they are often times excluded from key decision making posts in community-organized activism.

Rosita attributes her increased awareness of the socio-environmental impacts of mining extraction and activism to Lina. "We were just *gente de campo*," a term used to denote a farmer without knowledge of their rights, "but she taught us how to fight with the authorities, journalists, and defend what is ours. What god has given us. She is the only woman who has shown *gente de campo*." She contrasts the political education received through the women's networks with that of the water board. "Dr. Perez is from here, but hasn't done anything," she says referring to lack of educational opportunities. In turn, she explains, Lina has raised our consciousness, taught us to be strong, to know how to fight, and why we are fighting. Mari agrees, "With Dr. Perez, he doesn't give people information. Absolutely nothing. People follow him, like Rosita said, like sheep." Her mom says, "We followed him before but not anymore."⁹⁶

As a result of their awareness of mining related impacts, the group of women readily speak in front of crowds during rallies. They refer to this as "learning how to

96 Having also collaborated with the community drinking water systems during my fieldwork; my perception is that Rosita and Mari's comments overstate the lack of education/empowerment by water board leaders. Carlos Perez did organize workshops and video screenings as well as informational pamphlets to water users over the risks of mining extraction. However, I agree that these education/information opportunities were limited and not targeted towards dairy farming women who comprise an important segment of registered and non-registered water users.

speak.”⁹⁷ Whereas before they say that they were afraid or ashamed to speak; now they do so without worrying if it comes out “good or bad,” as Mari says.

Shortly after campesina women attended the conference, they established the Pachamama Women’s Defense Front as a way to bring together their struggle with the anti-mining struggle of women from Molleturo—just west of Cuenca who was also facing mining extraction in their watershed as well as women from the eastern lowlands in Morona Santiago. Organizing alongside women from other place-based movements has also had an effect in how campesina women articulate their demands. Rosita, best described this in a story where Don Guillermo, the president of the irrigation canal board, called her “stupid” for her defending the Oriente (Amazonian lowland).” But to her defense Rosita, recounts: “the Oriente is also ours—we are all eating fruit, oranges, papayas,....where does he think all of this comes from....it comes from the Oriente, [or] from the coast, and so we have to defend everything not just one little piece of land. *I* defend it all” she emphasizes. Underscoring the connections between the different place-based struggles, challenged the political discourses of some water board leaders who work towards the conservation of their own watersheds in Quimsacocha.

Gender-based organizing in the anti-mining movement had a multiplier effect too. Lourdes, a 36 year old small-scale dairy farmer, was a founding member of the women’s organization but in 2009 split with the group to establish her own women’s group dedicated to productive activities. She told me, “My dream is to have a women’s

97 This term came up in several of my informal conversations and formal interviews with members of the Pachamama Defense Front from April 2008 to May 2009.

organization, with four or six women but really strong women, and create an organization for work. In Intag (Ecuador) the women produce coffee, they make shampoo, and all of that, and more and more of them work. Why can't we raise guinea pigs or chickens [for market]?" Still active in the anti-mining movement after her split, Marta was pivotal in securing funds from the local government to start a knitting and potato farming women's co-op.



A woman from San Pedro de las Escaleras shows off a medicinal plant in danger of disappearing with mining development.

Some notable contradictions

Coordinadora leadership created opportunities for women's political empowerment, but ignored differences among the diverse group of women. The lack of attention to intersectional identities in the women's organizing process means that racism has been reproduced within the women's organizing. At times, urban mestiza women speak in the name of campesina and/or indigenous women. The lack of attention to differences may be rooted in local Marxist political ideologies that focus on highlighting a militant campesino identity, which is a race-neutral identity. It could also be related to the second-wave feminist ideologies that were shared among Lina and Julia. Moreover, there are old resentments between Lina, Fernando, and the indigenous movement.

One day I asked Fernando about the possibilities of collaboration between *Coordinadora* and CONAIE. Fernando shot me a cold look and began an onslaught of racist epithets. He told me that the indigenous movement in his native Amazonian province of Morona Santiago are weak and corrupt, and have their "arms crossed" doing nothing against mining. "If it were not for the Coordinator and the campesinos [he meant mestizo settlers in the Amazon] there would be no anti-mining movement." He disparaged indigenous leaders for being "Ponchos dorados" or *golden ponchos*, a racial slur popularized in the 1990s to undermine the authority of educated and eloquent indigenous leaders.

Moreover, he believed that the *Coordinadora* was freeing campesinos from the so-called repressive institution of the community water board. He called the water-board organization a repressive institutions run by "*caciques*" like Carlos Perez who abuse the

power that they have by fining water-users.⁹⁸ Interestingly, over the course of the following year the argument—that water board leaders are power-hungry caciques—become familiar to me because it was the exact description of the water-board leaders that I would hear from city and local officials who support mining and the same excuse that president Correa gave to nationalize water resources discussed in Part II of this dissertation.

I interpreted his comments as part of a mestizo racism that was empowered by the nationalist turn. I questioned my collaboration with the organization. His comments and the contradictions in the *Coordinadora* organization lead me to develop closer relations with the water board, in spite of their limited gender focus, and co-establish the Quizha-Quizha collective. At every turn it seemed that anti-mining politics was far from simple and straightforward. Maintaining an ethic of supporting campesina women's empowerment *and* subaltern indigenous-mestizos water access became my guiding principle in navigating the thorny set of divisions that resulted from post-neoliberal environmental practices and discourses.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined what Correa's political project for *Twenty First Century Socialism* or the *Citizens Revolution*, has meant for community water struggles. Correa's promise to protect rural watersheds from multinational mining activity was not immediately forthcoming, and after staging a major protest, the government responded by identifying a faction within the protest movement that was willing to work with the

⁹⁸ Fieldnotes, February 18th, 2008.

government to suspend IAMGOLD. Some leaders in the community-water board system forwent movement unity and decided to participate in the high-level commission to investigate IAMGOLD's legal violations. They attempted to pursue the lines of institutional revolutionary rhetoric and see to what extent the changes in the government were substantive and favorable to their constituents. The majority of who were people that had little or no irrigation water access and unreliable drinking water access. Although the Correa's administration used revolutionary language and appointed sympathizers of indigenous and environmental rights to key posts within the Ministry of Energy and Mines, ultimately, the decision to conserve 3,220 hectares of wetlands left IAMGOLD's mining project intact and campesino watersheds vulnerable to mineral extraction. The area earmarked for conservation did not overlap with gold deposits or with campesino watersheds.

The decision to conserve 3,220 hectares fits well within the boundaries of neoliberal "green" mining projects where sustainability and conservation practices are a cornerstone of extractive industries. Yet, in this case, the questions of conservation is framed within state revolutionary discourses that draw attention to the state's role in forcing the multinational company to relinquish control over water resources, even if these acts do not displace or undermine the mining project in question. This is an example of what I have called post-neoliberal environmentalism. All of this not only continued to legitimate the mining project but began to place watersheds into state hands. By involving the urban municipal water company ETAPA, the controversial decision also upheld urban/rural divides that have shaped regional power differences. In spite of the

public speeches and celebrations, the transfer of the 3,220 hectares to ETAPA had not been achieved due to a maze of bureaucratic and technical requirements that were still being worked out when I left the country in 2010.

The decision to protect 3,220 hectares resulted in divisions among local activists who belonged to two primary groups, one of which was led by the community water boards and the other which was led by the Marxist nationalist group the *Coordinadora*.

Ironically, the divisions that resulted did not necessarily weaken anti-mining activism. Instead, it revealed the sexism within the water board system and sparked a gender critique among campesina women. Facilitated by the *Coordinadora*, the organization educated women on the effects of mining and empowered them as leaders. Campesina women not only became empowered political subjects but also added the vibrancy of community-based resource activism. Yet the very organization that empowered the women bolstered mestizo racism by turning a blind eye to the differences between and among the women and upheld racist ideas of the water boards as backward caudillos and the indigenous movement as *golden ponchos*.

Chapter 3: State violence, mestizaje, and disconnections in the building of an environmental coalition.

INTRODUCTION

After the fall-out over the 3,220 hectares, the National Coordinating Committee and the community water system went their separate ways. Because I had initially established relations with the *Coordinadora* I accompanied the group to the coastal city of Montecristi.⁹⁹ The crowd assembled in the plaza just below the carved-out hill that housed the National Constituent Assembly building. It was a hot and humid day with street vendors moving through the crowd selling cold bottled water. A couple hundred people from different parts of the country gathered around a cement band-shell listening to Alberto Acosta. The former Minister of Energy and Mines had stepped down from his post in 2007 and by the time I started my fieldwork in 2008, he was the President of the National Constituent Assembly.¹⁰⁰ Acosta responded to the demands made by the

99 Montecristi is the birthplace of General Eloy Alfaro, former president, widely celebrated for the leading popular reforms during the turn of the 20th century. Correa chose Montecristi, and the construction of “Ciudad Alfaro” to lay the symbolic and material grounds to continue the “unfinished work of transforming the country.”

100 The National Constituent Assembly was comprised of 130 *asambleistas* of which 80 (a majority) were from the Country Alliance party. The assembly was divided into a directive council with a President (Alberto Acosta), Vice-President (Fernando Cordero, the former mayor of Cuenca), two *Vocales*, and a Secretary. Assembly members were divided into thirteen thematic working groups or *mesas* as they were referred to; fundamental rights; state organization, structure and institutions; *ordenamiento territorial*; natural resources; employment and production; development model; anti-corruption; and legislation and oversight committee. The role of the thematic working groups were to receive, analyze, and systematize proposals for the constitution related to these specific themes that were brought by civil society organizations and draft the related constitutional articles.

National Coordinating Committee. Lina Solano and her organization presented a letter and a set of legal proposals to declare Ecuador free of large-scale mining and the nationalization of resources.

Tall, thin with wire-framed glasses, Acosta embodied a passionate intellectual. “This is a definitive hour,” he began, “this is the occasion to introduce structural changes that the Ecuadorian society requires. [...] The struggle is to write into the new constitution clear guidelines so that history does not repeat itself.” He drew a parallel between colonial and neoliberal policies. The latter transformed Ecuadorian legislation allowing for more than 4,000 mining concessions to be adjudicated by the state without regard for indigenous, afro-Ecuadorian, and mestizo farmer lands and watersheds or even town plazas and cemeteries.¹⁰¹

His speech enframed environmental struggles within a patriotic sentiment. “Our job is to rescue the government, to recuperate sovereignty, and end a dependency on transnational capital and multilateral institutions. That is our job. If all turns out well, we will be very soon celebrating the birth of a nation that respects life; that respects nature...

101 While politicians and activists had talked about how indigenous, mestizo and Afro-Ecuadorian peoples were all affected by resource extraction, it was not at clear to me how different processes of racialization may have played a role in shaping specific forms of resource struggles faced these three groups. In an insightful article, Nicola Foote (2006) argues that blacks and indigenous have been differentially racialized since nation-building and state consolidation in the early 20th century. Highland indigenous people were racialized as backwards and culturally inferior but with education could “catch up” to white Ecuadorians. Afro-Ecuadorians on the other hand, were racialized as biologically inferior and hence did not have the same ability to “catch-up” to whites. This racialization process created Ecuadorian racial geography. State monies were invested in educating highland Indians, but no money—in spite of black petitions—were invested on the Pacific coastal province of Esmeraldas and the highland Chota Valley (Foote 2006). Now, these two areas are represented as extremely violent, backwards, and poor black places. Probably due to a combination of physical distance (Esmeraldas was more than a 16 hour bus ride away) and the internalization of racial ideology, my collaborators did not make an effort to organize with Afro-Ecuadorian resource struggles.

long live Eloy Alfaro Dammit!” The crowd of mestizo, indigenous, and afro-Ecuadorian campesinos yelled “*Viva!*”

Nationalist discourses softened the binaries between social movements and state institutions, even if momentarily. Acosta’s powerful anti-colonial, anti-neoliberal speech invoked the popular memory of Eloy Alfaro—a beloved General and former President that led liberal reforms during the turn of the 20th Century. The memory of Eloy Alfaro was mobilized in the 1980s by a militant left-wing armed group but now formed part of a state nationalist project. Montecristi was the birthplace of Eloy Alfaro. Acosta used the image of Alfaro to call for radical change, which was defined by putting a stop to large-scale, multinational mineral extraction. At the closing of his speech, Campesinos and their allies triumphantly chanted, “The people, united, will never be defeated!” A celebratory mood took over.

Acosta made an important announcement at the rally. He confirmed rumors that the Assembly would most likely emit the Mining Mandate—a piece of legislation that would overturn most, if not all mineral concessions, including ones belonging to IAMGOLD, International Minerals Corporation, Corriente Resources (known locally as ECSA), and Aurelian Resources. These companies held concessions belonging to the four most promising mining projects and that provoked some of the most visible conflicts with local communities [See Figure 3]. The mandate promised to reflect the political demands made by the *Coordinadora* as well as other anti-mining activists who challenged the legitimacy of the mining concessions on the basis of a lack of community consultation guaranteed by the constitution and international conventions. Even so, Lina

Solano and Fernando Mejia, leaders of the National Coordinating Committee were still suspicious of Acosta. They blamed the former Minister of Energy and Mines for divisions in their organization (see previous chapter) and were also skeptical of so-called revolutionary changes made from within state structures. But, after having gained little from Correa's campaign promises, they came to test the waters; that is, to see how far the National Constituent Assembly's promise for structural reform could go.



Figure 3: This map indicates mineral reserves in six provinces as well as the major and minor mineral projects. Four major projects in the south that provoked the most visible social conflict corresponded to Quimsacocha, Río Blanco, Fruta del Norte, and Mirador/Mirador Norte. Maps such as these were often published in the newspapers to educate the public about the country's mineral potential.

As I chronicle the windy road that activist had to travel to get the Mining Mandate emitted, I focus on another set of political predicaments and binaries. Although the *Coordinadora* cut ties with the water board leaders, the organization's attempts to stake

out their own political protests resulted in a gendered form of state violence against campesino activists. Given the shrinking spaces for dissent under Correa, the *Coordinadora* was forced to seek alliances with other people affected by mining, dam, and forestry projects to stage a national movement to protect resource rights. However, in the process of creating a national coalition, two key predicaments emerged. First, how do activists overcome differences in environmental protest? Given the mestizo racism prevalent among some of the *Coordinadora*'s leadership, could they create a unified political platform with the national indigenous movement who maintained an identity-based movement but was also critical of Correa's extractive policies? Two, how do activists protest the government's mineral policy without falling into accusations by the President and his supporters that any form of dissent was an alignment with right-wing conservative forces?

Early 2008 was a politically crucial moment in national mining politics. The rewriting of the Ecuadorian Constitution presented an opportunity to challenge mineral extraction and rewrite a legal framework for the implementation of an economic system compatible with the collective territorial rights of afro, indigenous, and mestizo campesinos. The 1998 Constitution recognized indigenous collective rights, but it also developed the legal framework to deepened neoliberal reforms in 2000, which reinforced racial hierarchies that benefited a white-mestizo urban ruling class and a handful of multinational companies. With people like Acosta at the helm of the ANC, the new constitution and related legislation could usher in new ways of state engagement with

subaltern peoples and their environments or it could prove to be yet another disappointment such as Correa's 3,220 conservation scheme.

A REPRESSIVE STATE

Four months after the Montecristi trip, the political panorama for the anti-movement looked grim. The Mining Mandate promised by Acosta in early 2008 was not forthcoming. Although the state had cancelled several mineral concessions, none of these concessions belonged to IAMGOLD or to any of the other contentious mineral projects. In addition to these limited gains, the state government was prosecuting those arrested during the June 2007 protest when the water-boards opted for state dialogue. Lina, for instance, was arrested on charges of assault to a police officer. Moreover, Correa lambasted anti-mining leaders on his weekly Saturday radio show, "*Dialogo con el Presidente*," and later known as *Enlace Ciudadano*. In one radio show, he qualified the growing anti-mining position as "foolish" and said that their position implied the closing off of development opportunities for the country, "we may as well turn off the lights and go pick melons in Murcia [Spain]." He pleaded with the country to give resource development a chance, "with clean hands," he promised to turn oil and mining development into a "blessing," not a curse. In his radio address, he identified Lina Solano as a ringleader of the anti-mining movement to which Lina interpreted as an attempt to threaten and intimidate her.

The mining industries lobby efforts in the National Constituent Assembly (ANC) cast an even greater uncertainty over the future of the Mining Mandate. Assembly member Mónica Chuji wrote a public letter to denounce multinational mining companies

that were trying to woo ANC members to support mining development in the country. At the end of January 2008, the Kichwa assembly member wrote: “To allow multinational mining companies to dictate the new Constitution would be to renew the colonial era.” She continued, “We see a disproportionate presence in Montecristi of those with the greatest economic resources who can invest in lobbying, such as various multinational mining companies. They are desperate to plunder in exchange for crumbs the gold and copper found in our subsoil in areas where our people have been excluded and ignored by the state.” Chuji’s letter was written amid rumors that Canadian mining companies offered all expense paid trips for ANC members to tour ostensibly ‘responsible’ mining operations in Canada. These trips were interpreted by activists as an attempt to neutralize the growing criticism that mining extraction endangers water, lands, and biodiversity. It was possible that industry lobby efforts had stymied the emission of the Mining Mandate.

In response to Correa’s deepened commitment to mineral extraction, and the stalling of the Mining Mandate by the Assembly, the *Coordinadora* decided to take action and stage another road blockade.

The *paro*

I arranged with Berta and her family to spend the night before the road-blockade at their house. Mari met me at the Feria Libre where we took a bus to their home in Tarqui, just off of what used to be a stretch of the Pan-American Highway. We got off on a corner right before the bus turned eastward to the canton of Cumbe and walked several feet to their house. Berta greeted us and immediately apologized for her “humble” home. She explained that when her husband was alive they had about 16 cows, now they only

have two. Her house was ‘modern’ back then she told me, it was made of brick when everyone still had an adobe house. Now, she said that it was the poorest one on the block. It was dwarfed by two three story homes flanked on either side built by money from migrants. But, I liked her home; I thought it was cozy and inviting. It had a pretty brick arc at its entrance and small iron cross on its adobe tiled roof—a practice that was still done among some subaltern urban and rural families to bless their homes when they are newly constructed.

That night we drank sweetened tea with herbs from their garden while we waited for Benjamín to call. As the local National Coordinating Committee delegate, he was charged with organizing the logistical part of the roadblock. I sat in a simple padded brown chair in the family’s living room and noticed a bible in Quechua near the altar. The altar had a small collection of *recuerdos* from baptisms, images of various saints, flowers and paja, and trinkets from various forums and events. One was from the indigenous catholic organization to which Berta and Mari belonged to and which played a significant role in their politicization. I picked up the bible and asked Berta if she could read Quechua. “no, my love, not anymore.” As I took a stab, she would correct me sometimes and gave me the meaning of some of the words that I was reading. Her mother used to speak to her in Quechua, but she says that she has forgotten most of it.

Benjamín called as we lay in bed watching TV and coordinated with Mari for an early morning pickup. A group of people went out in the very early morning hours to dig trenches and place rocks and cement blocks across the roads. The group was not going to only block the two main highways: the old and the new Pan-American, but also the

unpaved back roads that people could use to take their milk out to market in Cuenca.

“You see” Benjamin would tell me later, “not everyone collaborates. Some people just think of themselves and their personal gains, even though they also get their water from Quimsacocha.” The road blockade would not only paralyze economic activity coming into and out of Cuenca, but it would also obligate rural residents to abide with collective actions to protect their water supplies.

Before dawn, we hurried out of the house without eating much more than a simple piece of bread with honey and anise tea. I walked with Mari a block over to the imaginary line that divided Tarqui from Victoria del Portete, where a group of women in *polleras*, with rubber boots, and *chalina*’s tied around their waists pulled rocks and pieces of cement onto the road. I call the line imaginary because the families from the two communities, Estación de Cumbe on the Tarqui side and San Pedro de las Escaleras on the Victoria del Portete side are related to each other and hold plots of land on either side. Even so, Berta’s family was somewhat estranged from the rest of Escaleras. Mari said that the people from Escaleras treated their family differently even though her grandfather had Doñated the land where the San Pedro de Escaleras church was built. That morning, however, the differences didn’t seem to matter on the surface. They gossiped of neighbors who had tried to pass the blockade to sell their milk. They confirmed Benjamín’s suspicions of how some community members would try to circumvent the road blockade for personal gains.

A truck soon pulled over. The truck bed was filled with boxes of freshly baked buns and thermoses dispensing warm milk and coffee. The truck was sent by Juan Carlos

Serrano, the owner of the milk cooling station that provided over 25,000 liters of milk per day to *Toni*, a national yogurt and milk brand. Many people in the protest movement sold small batches of raw milk to Don Serrano, as they called him. He was from a land-owning family in the city of Cuenca. In fact, his family owned the land on which my apartment at the time and a series of middle-class homes were built in the last twenty years. He bought his land in Victoria several years back. Some people attribute the intensification of the dairy industry to his setting up of the cooling station. Although he would not join the direct action, this was the way that he provided support. His contributions (not public) would later become a point of contention among some anti-mining activists.

After setting up the blockade, I headed back to Berta's house where I was encouraged to eat more breakfast. Her kitchen had a privileged view of the "Y de Cumbe," an important artery of the Pan-American Highway. Passing the flat expanse of pasture lands, I could see that a group of farmers had blocked the "Y." The smoke from burning tires was visible in the distance. A long line of inter-provincial buses, transportation trucks, and cars were stopped along the highway. The *compañeros* blocked not only the travel between Cuenca and Ecuador's two major southern cities, Loja and Machala, but also eastward towards the town of Cumbe, whose road would eventually descend down into the lowlands.

Women in the anti-mining movement

Beatriz sent her eleven year old son, Enrique, with me to go to the road blockade. He drove his bike in circles as I walked. Approaching the blockade, I saw some of the women from the women's group and so I sat with them along the curb. I was still trying to decide the best way to contribute to the struggle, so I interviewed the women for an article for upsidedown world. Lourdes the least shy of the group wanted to talk first and spoke into my recorder "We are here with the compañeras defending the Pachamama, *nuestra madre tierra*, (our mother earth) we will be here until victory, compañera" She fumbled her words, still grappling with the order of them, but finally sang: "*creando, luchando, poder popular*," which literally translates to, "Creating, fighting, popular power." She went on to note, "This is going to seriously affect us. Like many, we are starting to understand this. Firstly, the *guagua*'s [Q. for children]. [Mining] will bring leukemia, cancer. We don't want this. We want clean water, sweet water, pure water, that is what we want."¹⁰²

I found it interesting that the demands for clean water were framed within dominant female gender roles of women as mothers. Lourdes was not married, nor a mother, but she did help raise her siblings' children while they lived and worked in New York City. The concern for children's welfare was also a point for other women who were also unmarried with children. Evelyn for example, said, "we are here for reasons that affect all of us. Mining affects water...[and] also destroys the environment. [With mining development], it will dry out the earth, the children will be born with genetic

¹⁰² Interview, Lourdes, April 2008.

mutations, we will all get illnesses that we have never seen before. That's why we are here at the road blockade."

Evelyn's response was filled with fear and anxiety about a future with mining development. As I would get to know her later, her statements seemed interesting to me given that she went on to study at a Catholic University and spent most of her time at her mom's shop in Cuenca. Her mother and sister, which comprised their family did not seem 'tied' to the land in the same way that Lourdes did who worked daily with her dairy cows. But, even if she studied and labored in the city, she still came home to San Pedro de las Escaleras and was still part of an agrarian community.

Her mother reinforced the dominant gender-appropriate expression around mining. Doña Graciela, who owned a small store filled with baptism and first communion outfits for children in the market district of downtown Cuenca, declared into my tape recorder, "we're not going to give up; we're not going to get tired. We are going to defend, with *teeth and nails* like the way a mother defends a child, that's how we are going to fight."

The image of a mother protecting a child (the environment) seemed to signal gender appropriate way of performing and enacting radical anti-mining politics. Moreover, their statements drew heavily from the images and stories that they had heard at the international women's conference where women from across the Americas shared first hand experiences of the adverse effects of mining development. In the public forum and through informal conversations, the campesina and mestiza women talked about how their lands dried up and their children became sick. By the end of the conference, the

women especially from Guatemala and Peru encouraged the Ecuadorian women to stop mining before it starts. They told them that once a mining company is set up there is nothing that they could do to stop it. Thus, the connections and shared experiences with women from mining countries shaped the arguments and actions of campesina women in Ecuador. This type of activism was not just a gender- or women's rights activism, but instead, fed back into community based activism carried out alongside men.

It turns out there was a lot of "gender" performance happening at the *paro*. I found Benjamín huddled in the midst of a group of people, with a *chalina* wrapped around him like a woman. I giggled aloud. His disguise was a way protecting key leaders in the local movement encouraged by Lina and Fernando. He asked if I was doing OK and I was.

It was mid-morning by then and although the *paro* was growing in numbers, the cluster of people could not have reached more than three hundred. People from Jima, just east of Victoria also affected by a different mining company, joined in the protest. Notably absent were the water board leaders. Beatriz had told me that Luis Morocho had driven down the road the day before with a megaphone saying to not go to the *paro*. They were upset. Padre Jaime, the parish priest, also shared some concern that the water board leaders had not come out. "the people here are very divided. There are small groups against the mine, but I, as the church [sic] and a few others want to get everyone together, to create a single front....we invited the water board leaders through official notices, at the mass, by mouth, but they decided last night that they weren't going to come out and support it." In spite of the decisions of some people to not join the road blockade, Padre

Jaime believed, “the church should be defending life. And the church has to be on the side of the poor, because without them, there is no salvation. That’s the only truth. And the poor are all of us that are affected by the multinationals [transnacionales], by the miners and all that which—well, has affected us badly.”

A bit later, but well before noon, a group of anti-riot police began to talk to some women. The women, including Rosita, were shouting at them to leave, but they were ordered to disperse the crowd. Oscar, from Tarqui, urged me to not take any risks. Heeding his words and fearing that the dispersal of protestors would soon start—as well as arrests—I headed back to Berta’s house to wait out the dispersal. Enrique was sent to accompany me back to the house. Not long after I left Governor Oswaldo Larriva came to the road blockade and pleaded with the crowds a peaceful dispersal. Refusing to leave the blockade, the police began the anti-riot operative. I heard a shot, and then watched a plume of smoke arise. The police launched tear gas into the crowd. I watched in helpless horror from the safety of Berta’s window as the anti-riot tank rushed the compañera/os out and shoveled the rocks aside. I could see some people running west, towards Victoria and Tarqui with the tank behind them. A crowd of university students, part of a Marxist group from Cuenca, with backpacks had joined the protest and were also running. I started to feel a little scared because the whole scene was coming closer to the house. Beatriz, who was at the house, was worried that the police would come into the house and start grabbing people.

The anti-riot tank didn't come down the part of their street but instead turned left towards San Pedro de las Escaleras and cleared the rocks that had been set out early that morning. The tear gas wafted inside of the house but was not overpowering.

Most of the family, Berta, Beatriz, and Enrique regrouped at the home, but Mari was missing. We listened to the radio in the hope of news. In the late afternoon, the station aired an interview with Governor Larriva and a Coronel. The interviewer said that a woman called the station crying saying that the police were going into peoples' homes and pulling people out. The Governor said that it wasn't true, that "there are no homes in the area." Meanwhile the Coronel said that they are "twisting the truth." Berta began to fret and imagined that Mari may have placed the call. We had tried calling her cell phone a zillion times but it went straight to voicemail. It turns out that Mari was not detained but was in hiding about 2 km away and had a dead cell phone battery. She emerged from hiding a few hours later when the smoke cleared.

Others were not so fortunate. About 17 people from Victoria were detained, including Rosita, Padre Jaime, and some of the university students.¹⁰³

Documenting Police Abuse and Repression

That evening we took the bus to the detention center in Cuenca. I joined the crowd of supporters gathered around the cement building. Police officers barred us from speaking to the detainees, but Rosita and I were able to relay messages through a police guard. Rosita was especially worried about her cows. They had to be milked the

¹⁰³ Local and national newspapers reported anywhere from 10 to 17 detained. 17 detainees were the figures that I received from the National Coordinating Committee.

following morning, if not the cows immediately dry up, drastically reducing milk production or get sick. I was able to locate the number of Lourdes, who also happened to be her neighbor, to take care of her cows. The arrest meant that campesinos had to indebted themselves to neighbors for favors such as tending to animals in their absence.

Several of us coordinated the gathering and delivery of blankets and food for the night. I sent several of my blankets over to the detainee's including one especially for Rosita. This act cemented my relationship with Rosita, who recalled nearly two years later during my departure my small act of solidarity.

The next day, a picture of a worried looking Father Jaime was blown up on page six of the *El Mercurio* newspaper. Two police officers on either side of him held onto his arms as if shoving him forward, while a Rosita could be seen behind the priest pulling his arm back. Three police men surrounded her.

Shortly after the arrests, I sat with Rosita to administer a human rights questionnaire. The questionnaire was carried out as part of my collaboration with the women's group to document police abuse. She explained what happened in the picture.

"the father was crossing in front of the Red Cross. Like a vicious dog, I saw how the police were running to get him, and that's when I said, 'I'm going, they are going to get him,' to Evelyn. I started running from where I had been hiding and by the time I got there they had already hit Father Jarra. I say [to the police] 'Mister's why do you detain him, has he killed someone, has he stolen? Where's the body? Where's that big, fat bull that he has stolen?' He is our priest, our Father, he is not doing anything. He said [to the

*police] 'I was going to get the Red Cross [ambulance] to take them to the wounded [the newspaper reported one woman was injured by a tear gas canister].'*¹⁰⁴

Rosita went on to explain how she grabbed Father Jaime to stop them from taking him to the paddy wagon [a moment that the newspaper report caught and publicized] but in the struggle to free the priest, both were subsequently hit and shoved by the police.

*"They pushed me and pulled me so that I would let go of Father Jaime, but I wouldn't let go of him. So they smacked him on the chest [she shows with her hand] and that did him wrong. I said [to the police] don't do that to the priest, if you want to hit or smack someone, do it to me, but not to him. They dragged us to the paddy wagon, and then right before going in, I tried to stop them, but they hit me...they elbowed me right on my neck...they hit my head.... they stomped on my foot so that I would fall.. I fell.—well- I didn't fall, I put down my hand like this [she shows me how she caught her fall]. My hat [she wore her tall white hat made of stiffened straw; a marker of gender and subaltern ethnic identity in the Southern rural Andes] went flying."*¹⁰⁵

Rosita was ultimately unsuccessful in resisting the arrest of Father Jaime and narrates that she *chose* to go to the paddy wagon, *"I got in the car [the paddy wagon]—I*

104 Interview, April 22nd, 2008

105 Ibid

*wanted to—I too will go with Father Jaime. Thanks that I went. Father Jaime fainted, and so I had to ‘grab air’ and soplarle [to blow on him] until he came to.”*¹⁰⁶

Once in the paddy wagon they waited for hours until they drove off with the other detainees to the military hospital. Although she had sustained injuries she refused to be examined and further of submit herself to a series of x-rays that medical staff suggested that she do. She refused because of “police presence,” implying that she would have had to undress in front of police in order to get the x-rays done. Meanwhile Padre Jaime, who was in his mid-thirties, had an on-going heart condition and was interned at the hospital. Rosita and the others were taken by the police to the local detention facility. At the station, Rosita continued to tell the police off, and recalls shouting, “*Long live the Paro, Dammit!*” and “*Down with Mining*” from the holding cell. “Even the *Colombianas* [a coded term for prostitute in this case] said “Bravo, Bravo!”¹⁰⁷

In Rosita’s narrative of police abuse, her actions in resisting state power are narrated and performed through culturally sanctioned idioms of Marianismo—of a figurative Mary protecting Jesus, bringing together Catholicism with dominant gender roles. This was not surprising given that Rosita is a catechist teacher. Her narrative reveals a complex political consciousness that resists ongoing state violence. In resisting the arrests, she positions herself as an agent, “*I chose to go to jail,*” and then later, when she was jailed, there was slippage and she positioned herself as a dominant, male figure, “*even Jesus was jailed for being innocent.*”

106 Ibid

107 Ibid

Yet in these narratives, coded in gendered Catholic symbols and metaphors, Rosita demonstrates a clear refusal to be vulnerable and subject herself to state power. She refused for instance to undergo the x-rays needed to ensure her health because doing so would place her in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis a masculine repressive state.

The newspaper the following day quoted her saying “We prefer to die at once then agonize without water.”¹⁰⁸ When I read it, I thought about the affectionate ways she would talk about her “vaquitas” or little cows when she talked about her fears about mining. She often talked about them in ways that exceeded the logic of the market. To her they were more than just a means to produce milk, but had strong feelings for her animals, “pobrecitos” or “poor things” she would often say when thinking about what effects mining could have, as if she was talking about a sick child.

Perhaps no woman was most affected by the police abuse than Marina del Valle, a law student from the University of Cuenca who was arrested at the protests at the Y de Cumbe. Marina del Valle was part of a group of students that joined the protests in solidarity with the campesinos. She and the other students were members of the Federation of University Students of Ecuador (FEUE). FEUE is a national level student organization that represents public university students that advocates for the rights of students to a free education and has an anti-imperialist political platform. The *Coordinadora* and FEUE had developed close relations their ties to the Marxist political party, MPD. Because the organization has close relations with unions and the MPD, they are often regarded as radical student group.

108 April 3, 2008. “Paro minero deja 14 detenidos y una herida,” El Tiempo, Cuenca, Ecuador.

When she was arrested at the protest, Marina was separated from the other detainees and held in the women's jail. The police reportedly found sticks of dynamite in her backpack and arrested her. While other detainee's were freed the next day, Marina stayed in jail.

University students took to the streets the day following the protests in Victoria and Tarqui. They blocked parts of downtown Cuenca to advocate her release. Several of us were there, including some of the campesinas from Victoria and Molleturo. The following day, Friday, after another round of police tear gas and forced evictions of the downtown protest, a petition for a "recurso de amparo" was approved and Marina was released.¹⁰⁹ She immediately made her story public. She was not only physically assaulted but taken to a private casino-like room where police congregated. She was forced to undress in front of policemen. The University rector declared to the local newspaper that he would file a lawsuit against the National Police for the mistreatment of university student.

Industry and State Responses to Anti-Mining activism

The spectacles of a 'feminized' campesino and student protest in contrast to a show of masculine state power brought into material form a debate over mining development, and more specifically the mining mandate. According to the national newspaper, *El Comercio*, the mining mandate was discussed in the ANC during the road

¹⁰⁹ April 5, 2008, "Policía acusa de Terrorismo a estudiante universitaria." *El Tiempo*, Cuenca, Ecuador.

blockade.¹¹⁰ Julia, an advisor and member of the National Coordinating Committee told the newspaper that there was a draft of the mining mandate in circulation but it only “recognized part of the community’s demands against large-scale mining,” and declared, “We have to fine-tune the proposal so as to revert all mining concessions given to foreign companies.”¹¹¹ *Coordinadora* leaders framed the protests and road blockade as part of a strategy to pressure the Constituent Assembly to emit an expansive mining mandate to cancel multinational mining investments, which was a first step to an alternative framework for asserting national sovereignty.

For their part, the Mining Chamber of Commerce—representing the interests of national and multinational mining companies—made public declarations that implied that members of the ANC were anti-democratic when it came to the mining mandate. The commission in charge with writing the mandate “did not accept a proposed meeting with the Chamber nor information on responsible mining activity,” wrote the newspaper. Cesar Espinosa, president of the Chamber declared “The application of this mandate could end the development of the [mining] sector...The Assembly does not permit points of view that lie outside of their ideological framework.”¹¹²

Leonardo Elizarde, the Vice President of Corporate Relations of ECSA, argued that actions to stop multinational, large-scale mining development were in fact undemocratic. He told a local newspaper that the majority of the country in fact supported mining development. He said that an opinion poll revealed that 80% of people

110 April 3, 2008, “La Asamblea revisa el mandato minero en medo de protestas.” *El Comercio*, Quito, Ecuador.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.

in Quito and Guayaquil are in favor of mining as are 70% of campesinos.¹¹³ It was unclear how his statistics or opinion polls were calculated or the data gathered.

Spreading Rumors

President Correa and his allies within the government launched a smear campaign to tarnish the reputation of the National Coordinating Committee's leadership. Only a few days before the *paro*, the President travelled to Sucúa—in the eastern lowlands—from where he gave a radio address. He said that there are leaders within organizations that are against mining and are being paid for by large transnational copper companies so that Ecuador doesn't extract copper and lower the international price. Even though he stopped short of mentioning her name, it was understood by the *Coordinadora* and activists that the president referred to Lina.

Worse yet, on the day of the *paro*, Correa's rumor was repeated by Larriva. In a short interview with Jennifer Moore, a close friend and Canadian journalist who was independently reporting on mining issues, Larriva told her to spend her research efforts elsewhere.

“Some of the leaders that are here need to be seriously investigated to see what interests they have. That is the work of a great journalist. You will see with the Mining Mandate that Correa and the Assembly are doing everything they can to improve the mining concession situation, which arose under previous governments, and this is

113 April 3, 2008, “Durante paro, detenido sacerdote,” El Mercurio, Cuenca, Ecuador.

something that the leaders will not tell you...because under previous governments they were silent when the concessions were given out. That is what you have to research, who gave out the concessions and who stayed silent.”¹¹⁴

The rumors had an effect on the National Coordinating Committee’s organizing. A *Coordinadora* affiliate group from Santa Isabel, just south of Victoria del Portete, backed out of the *paro* at the very last minute. Santa Isabel drew its water from the Quimsacocha páramo but would be most affected by small scale mining and a project by Cornerstone Resources located just south of IAMGOLD’s Quimsacocha project. Rumors circulated in Santa Isabel that Lina and Fernando had ‘hidden motives,’ meaning that their activism was not purely motivated by the defense of water and land. The rumors also spread through Victoria del Portete. Rumors of Lina’s complicity with the international copper industry were so enduring that in 2010, one water board leader asked me quizzically, “you didn’t know that Lina’s brother owns mines in the *oriente* and that’s why she’s against large-scale mining development? A truck driver who lives in the *oriente* told me and he knows.” The rumors were illogical because her activism would have hurt the industry she purportedly worked with. Even so, they spread keeping local divisions among the water boards and *Coordinadora* leaders in place and shrinking their popular base.

¹¹⁴ April 2, 2008, Jennifer Moore, interview with then-Governor Oswaldo Larriva.

DIFFICULTIES IN BUILDING COALITIONS

Radio La Luna

When students and campesinos protested in downtown Cuenca for the release of Marina, a small group of us met at the bus station. We were headed to Quito that night. The next morning representatives from different indigenous and popular environmental struggles would come together to develop a national strategy for how to deal with the State's push for extractive industries. The assembly was co-organized by the National Coordinating Committee and offered them an opportunity to broaden their alliances. The meeting was called, the Peoples' Assembly.

We arrived in Quito at 6:30 in the morning. Lina, Fernando and the others had a radio interview set up with *Radio La Luna*, which was regarded as Quito's lefty-political radio station. I wasn't feeling well after the bus ride so I went to a friend's house in the city to shower and rest a bit before the meeting. David and Claudia were long-time friends that I met back in 2000 when I first started to work in Ecuador. David worked for a US-based environmental organization and Claudia was finishing a Master's degree at FLACSO on work related to climate change and the environment.

Over breakfast, I told them about the government repression of the protests in Cuenca. Since they were part of the broader left in the country and had supported radical environmental struggles, I expected a sympathetic response. Instead, Claudia was silent on the issue of state repression and made a sharp critique of the campesinos for doing the road blockade. They are better served by doing "technical studies" on "environmental

services” she said. Her irritation came in part from her support of the Correa administration who she believed was making progressive changes in the government.

The complexity of protesting a president that symbolized social change was made even more explicit on the radio interview that morning. The interviewer, Ramon Pozo, kept asking the *compañeros*, “Why? why now? We have a leftist government, why do you protest now? Where were you guys during Sixto Duran Ballen or under Lucío Gutierrez [both known for implementing neoliberal reforms]? Why now?” This provoked a response from Fernando who accompanied the small group on the radio show, and the two ended up in an argument. A woman called in, repeating Correa’s popular slogan, “the nation belongs to everyone,” then added, “and a small group of *indígenas* cannot decide for the rest of the country.” A flood of calls continued in support of Correa and mining development.

Lucía from *Acción Ecológica* called in support. The organization was Ecuador’s most well known radical environmental group based in the capital city. The organization accompanied popular resource movements since the 1990s and they were famous for using direct action measures in their protests. Lucía’s organization was originally part of the National Coordinating Committee, but due to conflicts with Lina and disagreements over the road blockade in 2007, she and her organization distanced themselves with the *Coordinadora*. She reminded Ramon and the listeners that the anti-mining struggle dates back at least fifteen years and says that it’s understandable that indigenous and campesinos are protesting because the mining mandate hadn’t been emitted. Given the

tensions between she and Lina, I was surprised but delighted that she had come to the defense of the organization.

Norma Lojano—the president of the women’s organization in Victoria del Portete—was a part of the panel on the radio show and reiterated her opposition to mining development. Norma was a short, fair-skinned dairy farming woman from Victoria del Portete. Echoing the experiences of the women she met during the international conference, she argued that mining isn’t sustainable, “What would we live from? Everything will become a desert.”

I was incredibly outraged by the lack of support for the activists and was preparing a response to call in. In hind sight, perhaps I was exceeding the boundaries of ‘participant-observation,’ but the violence against the protestors had started to shape my own sense of self as an activist. Before I could call in, Ramon took a call from Lina who was not a part of the panel. She spoke against Correa’s “double discourse” of promising that the nation belongs to all, when in fact, he is repressing dissent or those opposed to his policies. Correa’s nationalist rhetoric promoted the idea of an inclusive nation by using popular catch phrases like the “Patria ya es de Todos,” or “The nation belongs to everyone now.” Yet, Lina was pointing out the contradictions within the state’s discourse, which—like earlier forms of nationalist rhetoric in Ecuador—worked to exclude subaltern peoples from the nation (see Stutzman 1981). In this case, the nation was inclusive only if one went along with the goals of economic development based on extractive industries, otherwise, farmers and others opposed to these measures were not part of the ‘patria.’ Lina pointed to the two-faced nature of the state.

The debate on the radio show was a clear example of how public debate around mining was being constructed. If someone opposed mining development, they were opposed to Rafael Correa and to all of the changes that he was doing in the country. In Quito, to be against mining was to be against Correa and in favor of the traditional ruling oligarchy, represented by Guayaquil's mayor, Correa's public enemy. This was the subtext in the radio calls and was something that would be made more explicit in the months that followed.

Peoples' Assembly & Mestizo Racism

The meeting for the Assembly was organized at the *Casa de la Cultura*; a round building that houses the Central Bank's archeology collection and is a venue for art, film, and theater. The Casa de la Cultura is also, at times, a site for Indian resistance. Indigenous people from different parts of the country have used the park that surrounds the Casa de la Cultura to set up tents, cook, and gather during nation-wide uprisings, especially the one that dominated the 2000 mobilization—the first indigenous uprising I attended. Inside the meeting room, I recognized some of my former colleagues and friends from environmental NGO's in Quito and waved to them before taking my seat next to Norma and Mari. It was a meeting ground of my past and present research worlds that had not yet converged. I was excited to see if collaborations between the environmental and indigenous movement in Quito and the anti-mining movement in Victoria, so dominated until then, by Marxist-oriented leaders could find a common political agenda and develop coordinated actions.

Over 100 delegates came in representation of various environmental and natural resource struggles. Mostly, they faced resource-intensive development projects in their territories; projects that were carried out by private companies and/or the state government, and included struggles from mining, oil, hydroelectric dams, lumber, shrimp industry, and forests. Key leaders, primarily from national organizations were seated at the head table: Marlon Santi, then-president of CONAIE; Presidents of the two different campesino social welfare organizations (FEUNASSC, with closer relations to the Marxist party, and CONFEUNASSC, with closer relations to the indigenous movement, as well as Julia in representation of the National Coordinating Committee, Auki Tituaña, indigenous mayor of Cotacachi in the northern highlands and close ally to the Intag anti-mining movement, as well as Salvador Quishpe—the former indigenous congressman and now head of an organization called the Southern Resistance Front to Large-Scale Mining (FRESMIGE) which primarily organized indigenous and mestizo campesinos against the Mirador mineral project owned at the time by Ecuacorriente Resources (ECSA, as it was also known). Mateo Meza was also there in representation of the Acción Ecológica. The meeting was originally called on by the *Coordinadora* and organized by Julia, Salvador, and Mateo. Salvador opened up the meeting with a call for establishing unity:

“Foreign companies, the neoliberal model, these capitalist systems are killing the pueblos, let us unite against this, let us look for common objectives [...] We cannot struggle alone: Intag, struggles alone, El Panguí, struggles alone, Las Naves, struggles

alone, in Azuay, the brothers from Victoria del Portete, struggling alone, that cannot be, compañeros, we have to unite and have a single voice. If we struggle alone then the companies will laugh at us.”

Salvador called on the unification of different place-based struggles all facing extractive industries under capitalist systems. The meeting coordinators developed three discussion points for fostering the unification process invoked by Salvador. First, discuss how to achieve political unity given the differences in geography, type of resource struggle, and ideological-political objectives. Second, reflect on how the President and the National Constituent Assembly (ANC) has responded to social movement proposals, particularly those submitted in Montecristi and especially the demands around mining development. Third, develop a coordinated strategy for what to do about the current situation. The meeting was about taking stock of ‘big picture’ under Correa: what did Correa’s administration and the ANC mean for indigenous, campesino, and black resource struggles? How should the people respond to the government? The meeting for unity was a labored process that revealed the connections and much as disconnections between the multiple resource struggles. A key issue that emerged in the meeting was the place and role of the national indigenous organization as represented by CONAIE. As I show, mestizo racism as well as differences in political strategies within the *Coordinadora* made it difficult to establish a coalition with the national indigenous movement.

Marlon Santi, the president of CONAIE was elected to facilitate the meeting and not without some grumbling on behalf of some of the *Coordinadora* affiliates. A few people mistakenly believed that Santi's role as facilitator implied that CONAIE would lead the movement. But Julia cleared up the confusion reiterating that Santi's role was only to facilitate the meeting and that all decisions about the coalition would be up for a collective vote. Santi was allowed to take on the role of facilitator and was among the first to articulate the collective sense of distrust of the Correa government.

“My position is to unite the distinct groups because right now it is time to reject mining...and ask them why do they deceive us. Why doesn't the National Constituent Assembly dispatch the mining mandate? 15 days ago they told us that it would come out on Thursday, then they said Friday, and now they say it will come out next week, what is happening? What do they want to hide?”

Marlon insinuated that Correa along with the mining industry had blocked the release of the mining mandate. He echoed the popular perception among the activist present that the government has betrayed the anti-mining movement. Because CONAIE has played such a prominent role in social mobilizations in the past two decades, some activists called on the organization to lead a national coalition movement against the government. For instance, Hugo, from the organization in Santa Isabel that had dropped out of the *Coordinadora*'s road blockade at the last minute, advocated for a broadening of indigenous national politics.

“Although CONAIE has done good things, CONAIE has also taken posts [in the government]. It used to be much more open than it is today. It can become that again, and the president of CONAIE is entrusted with uniting their ancestral peoples as well as ourselves who are not that ancestral or native.”

Hugo’s intervention shows that subaltern mestizos from the South may not identify themselves as “native” or as “indigenous,” but perceived their struggles to be compatible with those of indigenous people. By asking CONAIE to lead a broadly conceived resource struggle, Abel challenged the common belief that CONAIE could only represent ethnic group politics and

Disagreements over the extent to which CONAIE would lead the popular anti-mining struggle were addressed by Mari who set conditions to CONAIE’s participation. In a sharp, firm, voice Mari said,

“Unity is fine, but I want to emphasize [to] CONAIE, ECUARUNARI that then forms Pachakutik [sic], we are not willing to negotiate, we are not willing to go to dialogue with the government. The government has already declared itself as a miner [code for sell-out], so we shouldn’t give them an opportunity, because in Victoria del Portete, we have already been deceived. Let’s be clear: no to negotiation, and no to dialogue, because our water and our life is not up for negotiation!”

Mari's narrative of government betrayal showed an equal distrust for the Correa administration as that of CONAIE's political strategies. At the time, CONAIE engaged in talks with the government to recognize Ecuador as a Plurinational State in the new Constitution. Less than a month prior to the assembly, CONAIE mobilized 30,000 indigenous and non-indigenous people to march through the capital for the 'Defense of Plurinationality, Sovereignty, and Natural Resources.'¹¹⁵ A dialogue commission was formed in response to the action, which comprised of three state Ministers, an advisor, and CONAIE representatives.¹¹⁶ The commission was considering CONAIE's legal proposal to recognize Ecuador as a Plurinational State in the new constitution and reestablish the country on the principles of equality and reciprocity.¹¹⁷

But at the Assembly, CONAIE's long-time strategy of combining *protesta* with *propuesta*—or protest with state engagement—was under fire by *Coordinadora* affiliates were affected by the fall out of the 3,220 hectare decision. Mari, as with others, called for radical political measures. I understood Mari's sharp words to Santi as part of the ideological tensions between the *Coordinadora* and CONAIE's political program as well as some internalized racist ideas about the indigenous movement as morally corrupt group of leaders that was held by people like Fernando.

115 Simbaña, Floresmilo, "La Plurinacionalidad en la nueva constitución" in Análisis. Nueva Constitución. Francisco Muñoz ed. ILDIS-La Tendencia. Quito. (2008). Accessed at: <http://www.institut-gouvernance.org/en/analyse/fiche-analyse-453.html> on January 7th, 2012.

116 Ibid.

117 According to CONAIE's proposal from 2007, Plurinationality is roughly translated as 'a system of government and model of political, economic, and socio-cultural organization that proposes justice, individual and collective rights, respect, reciprocity, solidarity, and the equal development of the entire Ecuadorian society, and of all its regions, cultures, on the basis of the legal, political, and cultural recognition of all of the Nationalities and Indigenous Peoples that make up Ecuador,' from Proyecto Politico de las Nacionalidades de Ecuador 2007 cited in Simbaña 2008.

The *Coordinadora* leaders were Marxists and believed that class-based organizing [in this case, campesino] should be privileged over racial/ethnic organizing. They rejected any form of race or ethnic based organizing as divisive and instead advocated for the revolutionary potential of the *pueblo* –in this case a campesino political class who were threatened to be dispossessed from their lands and resources by neo-colonial forces such as multinational mining companies and the bourgeois state. *Coordinadora* leaders held workshops analyzing current political trends through this framework in which they emphasized that there was no revolutionary potential within state structures because the state always served the interest of the elites.

Their interpretation of Marxist political thought shared some of the same premises of nationalist mestizo state ideology. Instead of examining differential forms of exploitation and discrimination, the mestizo state and Marxist organizations have historically labeled subaltern mestizo and indigenous groups under the racially-neutral term “campesino.” In Victoria del Portete, this racially-neutral term was adopted within the context of state agrarian projects and the formation of a capitalized family dairy farming industry. The use of such a term enabled people—like Mari’s family—to distance themselves from their indigenous roots and embrace the cultural whitening project offered by mestizo nationalist ideology (See Stutzman 1991).

The widespread embrace of mestizaje in Cuenca and its surrounding areas was also recounted to me also by an indigenous leader who worked on expanding indigenous bilingual education in the area. He found it extremely difficult to get parents interested in the bilingual school because of mestizaje. Parents believed that indigenous languages

were backwards and did not necessarily believe that it would help their children. Instead, they wanted their children to learn English and Spanish so that they could go study at the University and get jobs in the city. Thus, the *Coordinadora's* leadership and popular base fit within the parameters of dominant racial thinking in Cuenca and ignored the importance of CONAIE's political struggle that included questions of resources but also included questions difference and citizenship.

President Correa also held deeply racist beliefs. Indigenous mayor and intellectual Auki Tituaña came to the meeting from a northern province, where a multi-racial group of campesinos had disputed mineral extraction since the 1990s. Tituaña recounted an earlier skirmish with Correa. He told the assembly that before Correa was elected President, a binomial presidential nomination was proposed where Correa would run as Auki's vice-presidential candidate. According to Tituaña, Correa rejected the proposal, saying 'My race does not place me second to anyone.'

"Such a racist focus isn't going to lead us anywhere. We all deserve respect," said Tituaña, and continued,

"[Correa] is an opportunist and I don't know what we are waiting for. He is not...changing the structures as he should. I think we are faced with two things here: continue believing [in Correa] or prepare ourselves for a radical and confrontational struggle, compañeros.[...] This revolutionary government is far worse than the neoliberal governments, at least in terms of mining.[...] Lets not go to meeting at the

presidential palace, eat their lunches, because it is through those lunches that they are buying us off”

Like Mari, he also cast doubt over the extent to which dialogue with the state was an appropriate political action. And even though Mari and others in the *Coordinadora* might have also internalized some of the ideologies of mestizaje, Tituaña agreed with them that the indigenous movement was mistaken in their efforts to try to occupy the spaces opened up by the Correa government.

Engaging Political Binds

After three hours of speeches and interventions, it was clear that the Correa administration continued, if not expanded resource development model on mestizo, indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian lands and watersheds. Many, if not most of these communities, were being assaulted violently through state and private forces. Similar to what happened during the *paro*, rural activists from other place-based struggles had also been arrested and/or hurt in skirmishes. One activist from the Pacific coast was a representative of the mangrove movement spoke about the violence. He was representing a multi-racial movement in Esmeraldas involving black costena communities, who lived from the gathering of shell fish in and around mangroves that were being cut for shrimp activity. He articulated the gravity of the state violence:

“I come in representation of the ancestral peoples of the mangrove forest of Ecuador...Big trucks hauling lumber leave our communities. In this past year, they have assassinated four of our compañeros. After we denounced this to the government,

nothing. They are killing us, while we [the left in the country] side with this government, this repressive government. Dayuma. Victoria del Portete. And they will continue to repress us. Whoever goes against the government, they are going to be repressed. “

But, if state violence was a shared experience, the question of how the groups would create a coalition with a shared political platform and strategy was far from resolved. Sergio Guaman, a mestizo campesino from the lowlands was the first to put out on the table an uprising for the twentieth of April. Many were in agreement that the situation was grave enough to merit a collective, nation-wide uprising but others called for increased lobby efforts in the ANC. A man from the lowlands pleaded with the crowd “it's not good to confront the national government. The government is doing [positive] things but it also has its errors. I think we should work towards the referendum [meaning, the constitution.].”

Auki Tituaña rejected the proposed dialogues but also articulated the political bind that the movement faced. If people go out to protest, “they will call us part of the right [the oligarchy]. Because according to them [popular opinion and the government] everyone against Correa is with the right. Like Paco Velasco. He said that I was Nebot’s *huasicama*,”—a racial slur meaning Indian servant. Nebot was the mayor in Guayaquil from Ecuador’s far right Christian party and was cast by the media and Correa as Correa’s enemy. The former director of Radio La Luna—the same radio station that challenged *Coordinadora* delegates earlier that morning— called Tituaña Nebot’s indian servant for speaking out against the government. Thus, the politics to undertaking a direct

action meant going against a highly oiled publicity machine that Correa constructed in which there were either two choices: Correa or the right wing oligarchy.

It remained unclear whether it was a question of logistics or a question of politics, but some of the national organizations such as CONAIE who earlier called for radical actions now seemed more cautious. Launching a movement in direct opposition to the government and/or their development projects during the time that the constitution was still being drafted may have made the risk of losing out on the ANC process too high for some leaders. Even so, another day long road-blockade seemed to be on the horizon. A date for a follow-up meeting was set for the 14th of April in Cuenca to confirm who exactly would participate in the uprising.

Insults and the deepening of the double-binds

The following day, the President launched a full public smear campaign. Correa travelled to Gualaceo—a small town east of Cuenca in the province of Azuay to transmit his Saturday radio show. This was the Saturday immediately following the road blockade. This time the threats seemed more serious than the earlier ones made by President Correa. It marked a campaign specifically targeted against Lina Solano, Salvador Quishpe, Julia, and Tarquino Cajamarca, various leaders within the anti-mining movement in Cuenca and the eastern lowland provinces. Activists interpreted his commentary as an attempt to incite a mining war among citizens and pueblos.

Correa's threats merit a lengthy quotation. Correa begins by addressing the National Coordinating Committee's road blockade on Wednesday and discursively frames their actions as a way of supporting the right-wing oligarchy.

“there are foolish and irrational people making preventative strikes to the national government because we do not...execute their demands: to immediately close all of the mining concessions! To nationalize the petroleum and hydroelectric plants! For how long are we going to put up with these kinds of people that are equally or more damaging than the right-wing groups. I’ve always said that certain radical left-winged groups that speak on behalf of the poor, of ecology...are the most dangerous.”

He declared that he would use an iron fist against the protestors. He also implied that Marina lied about being abused by the police:

“to block roads, to burn tires, to obstruct the free circulation of roads, to attempt against property is a felony and I am going to make them respect the law with no hesitation whatsoever! [...] There were 17 detainees, 16 were liberated, and all have penal processes, they could to jail because they betrayed the law [...] that girl with the dynamite, is now the one who is being abused. We will have to investigate but these things are hard to believe.”

Correa had been following the turn of events at the Assembly in Quito and called on “civilized” people to confront anti-mining activists.

“They are already announcing for a definite strike unless the national government accepts their demands. Let’s go! Let’s go to that strike! Let’s go and we’ll know how to respond. I call on all of the civilized citizens of the country. Denounce these unpatriotic people...these foolish irrationals...combat them!!”

Correa then began to name and insult individual leaders that were at the Peoples’ Assembly.

“there are some leaders here that make a living out of this...they are used to creating chaos...the gentlemen Salvador Quishpe; put him through an intelligence test and see how much he scores..[...] There are other leaders here...Lawyer Tarquino Cajamarca, councilman for the canton of Limon, be attentive Limon...instead of building roads, Cajamarca is closing roads! [...]Mr. Marcos Ochoa, proprietor of Radio Limon, agitator! Teacher Franklin Reinoso, agitator! Enough already!! And there are still some others, Julia [real name eliminated]! And..what is the name of this lady..oh! It is almost impossible to even talk about her...Lina Solano...please this lady..we have to send her to a psychiatrist, this is crazy!”

Correa’s threats and insults of the anti-mining activists relied on a racist stereotype that cast indigenous people as stupid and a sexist stereotype that cast women as crazy. The insults, combined with the police repression and abuse of women, helped to create a climate of paranoia and distrust within the movement. This was most vividly present that night, at Padre Miguel’s wake.

Padre Miguel attended the Peoples' Assembly in Quito and died in the early morning hours in a bus accident on his way back to Cuenca. That evening I went with Marcel—an activists from Cuenca who was a social catholic and worked in the public health sector and Julia, to the wake. Situated in the heart of a popular neighborhood, the wake was held in a small simple church in the outskirts of Cuenca. Nearly all of the same leaders from the southern Andes and lowlands, present at the Assembly were there. Even two women from Acción Ecológica, the environmental NGO in Quito, flew in that afternoon. Many of us prayed in silence or spoke outside the church in hushed tones. Even though it was a bus accident, some people made sense of his death through his activist work. Two women from the *Coordinadora's* women's group wondered if the death was really an accident and if perhaps he was intentionally murdered for his work with the *pueblo*.

The following day many of us returned to the unpretentious church for Padre Miguel's funeral. That morning, the newspaper reported that Correa's popularity was skyrocketing. Hardly anyone could stop talking about the Assembly. Rumors and anxieties about the national political scenario circulated. Just outside the church after the services were over, I recognized a *dirigente* from the eastern lowlands. We spoke at length about the Assembly and the decisions to go to a *paro*. He disagreed with the *paro*, because "sects of the military want Correa out so that they can take power." He feared that if we all went onto a *paro*, worse yet, an extended road blockade, the military and right-wing would make an alliance and use the protests as an opportunity to kick Correa

out of power. He believed Correa, even if misguided, was still better than the right-wing oligarchy.

This idea, that Correa was still “better” than the alternative, was a common argument that I would often hear in casual conversations especially within non-*Coordinadora* affiliates. Most *Coordinadora* leaders viewed this type of thinking as “buying into” the idea that Correa was somehow, underneath the repressive actions, still had progressive politics.

For me the *compañeros* fears revealed the double-bind that social movements faced specifically under Correa’s administration that underlined tensions in the Quito meeting. It was clear that radical reform required the groups to take political action, but the challenge was how to move forward: if they confronted the Correa administration directly through a nation-wide uprising they would be challenging new development projects that threatened resource rights, but would lose public support because they would be opposing a highly popular president. In this scenario they faced the risk of toppling a government that empowered a progressive ANC. Worse yet, if the movement was high-jacked by right-wing elites it would definitely close off the possibilities for progressive reform in the Constitution and end the possibilities for the emission of the mining mandate.

In the alternative scenario, if they continued to lobby the ANC for reforms, they might be able to expand alliances and gain public support but they would have to compete with mining industry lobby groups, potentially leaving President Correa to continue with a resource extractive model that put into jeopardy the rights of mestizo,

indigenous, and black Ecuadorians to life and livelihoods. I wondered if talk of a military take-over were rumors that circulated by the state to maintain Correa's power. Regardless, if rumors were part of state governing strategy or not, they created binds for activists that weakened possibilities for a unified collective political action and actively *dis-connected* activists from each other.

More State Threats

Threats to *Coordinadora* members and their families increased in the following days. On Wednesday the 9th, I meet up with the Defensoras de la Pachamama—the name of the women's group affiliated with the *Coordinadora*. The campesina women from different southern mining struggles established the regional women's organization earlier in the year to strengthen the connections among the parish-level women's organizations that had been established the year before that. We met at a small room at the University of Cuenca and the mood was light as some of the women chatted and joked around about funny moments in the protest. But during the meeting, the political situation was anything but light.

Mari and Lourdes said that they were receiving calls insulting them and speculated that it was pro-mining neighbors. Julia also reported a disturbing call. A few days earlier, Governor Larriva's brother, Kléber Larriva, was reportedly sequestered. His driver was found tied up to a tree near Larriva's property just outside of Santa Isabel. Julia recounted how she received a threatening phone call the night before. Her daughter answered the phone and the caller said something to the effect of 'you guys have kidnapped Kléber Larriva, Gabriel is next.' The caller blamed the *Coordinadora* for the

disappearance of Larriva and threatened to retaliate with the kidnapping of Gabriel, Julia's only grandson.¹¹⁸

In another set of disturbing news, Lina reported that the life of Lety Salcedo, another one of the members of the *Coordinadora* from the coast, was in danger. Lety reported that she was walking with a friend near her house and that someone shot her friend who died.¹¹⁹ She believed that the gunman mistakenly shot her friend instead of her. Lety's activism against small-scale mining activity on the western side of the Andean range resulted in a series of water and soil studies paid for by the municipal government of Guayaquil. The studies released on April 1st, 2008, showed alarmingly high levels of mercury, arsenic, copper, vanadium and cobalt in all four rivers.¹²⁰ Her organization, the Assembly for the Defense of Our Rivers, comprised of small-scale organic banana farmers, linked the contamination from small-scale mining in the San Gerardo Mining district. They believed that domestic mining companies operating in the San Gerardo mining district were responsible for the death threats against her as a result of the scientific studies. Interestingly, the science studies were paid for by the conservative

118 Kléber Larriva was rescued six months later by a collaboration between the Ecuadorian police Unit for Anti-sequestration and Extortion and the Colombian police. He was reportedly kidnapped for strictly economic reasons. The kidnapping was in no way affiliated with mining-related conflicts.

119 When Jennifer and I interviewed Esther the following year, she didn't mention this incident. She had received warnings that she was going to be killed after the science studies were released, but placed the first death related to her anti-mining activism to June 28th, 2008—two months after the meeting at the Defensoras. The first death involved a longtime friend of hers who was shot for warning her to leave her house because someone was going to kill her. She believes that the attempted assassination are linked to domestic mining interests in the San Gerardo

120 Municipalidad de Guayaquil DMA-CA-2008-309, "Oficio No. AG-2007-40572 del 3 de Diciembre 2007 Informe

Monitoreo de los Ríos, Canal, Suelo y Aguas de Pozos de la Parroquia de Tenguel" Signed by Eng. Jorge Narváez

Ochoa Coordinador de Gestión Ambiental and Eng. Francesca Escala Benites Asesor Técnico de Gestión Ambiental, April 4th, 2008

mayor who was Correa's public enemy, which lent a small kernel of truth to the idea that activists were aligned, if not reaping some benefiting from the right-wing.

Attempts to intimidate women sparked anger and a call for action. One of the women said that Correa "wants to be a dictator." Certainly, there seemed to be good reason to believe it. There was a collective agreement to do more "*denuncias*." Rosita proposed that they talk to Governor Larriva. She suggested that a contingent of women, "only those who wear *polleras* go," to play up the 'humble Indian woman.' She said, "Only God, not the Governor, can instill fear in me," she declared. Along the same lines, another woman suggested that the *mujeres* go back to Montecristi and talk to the *Asambleistas* about the repression. By the end of the meeting, the women decided that they would do a public *denuncia* of the repression and threats; Lina would write a press release in the name of the Defensoras de la Pachamama and a few of them would go to the radio station La Voz de Tomebamba the following morning to see if they could get a spot to publically denounce the intimidation tactics. Furthermore, the *Defensoras* women's group demanded that the ANC to extend an amnesty to those involved in 2007 protests to those detained in the April 2nd protests.¹²¹ The violence and threat meant to silence the women was having the opposite effect: it empowered them to publically denounce the violence.

That same day we also went to see a lawyer about the pending charges against those detained in the protest. It was unclear to me who exactly filed the paperwork to take

121 April 10th, 2008. Defensoras de la Pachamama/National Coordinating Committee, "Aceleran Juicio contra detenidos en paro preventivo," circulated via email. By this time, the ANC had already emitted an amnesty for several hundred protestors arrested during Correa's tenure for resource-related activism. But at this point, they had not included everyone arrested at the 2007 road-blockade in Tarqui.

the detainee's out of jail. Rosita, who held a long-standing grudge against Carlos Pérez, accused him of taking credit for the release of detainees. Rosita made us laugh; she would parody Carlos' cousin, also detained, who wailed in jail. Although Carlos was acting lawyer for the water-boards and some of the detainees, Rosita chose to be represented by a lawyer suggested through Lina and Julia's contacts. Jackie's office was in a turn of the century building in down town Cuenca. We walked several flights of stairs—the stairs were made of heavy wood and creaked with weight of our steps.

At Jackie's office, information circulated that bordered on the edge of fact and fiction. Supposedly, the police had pictures of those who threw rocks at them and picture of the trucks that brought burning tires. It appeared that the state would charge those arrested and those implicated in the photos with road closure and sabotage and terrorism. Everyone including the students gave official statements that day. The purpose, as the lawyer explained, was to collect testimonies and see if there was enough evidence for the public prosecutor to try them for charges of sabotage and terrorism. It was rumored that the state was accelerating the process of charges as an attempt to derail the impending strike for April 21st.

Paranoia started to spread. Father Jaime was there and told me that I really needed to be careful. "Get a new cell phone number" he advised. He believed that all of our cell phones were tapped, and further warned, "only talk in person about mining." Things were heating up.

Asamblea de los Pueblos in Cuenca

On the Monday April 14th, leaders from the various environmental struggles gathered once again, this time in Cuenca's *Salon de la Ciudad* to finalize actions for the 21st of April 2008. More than just a logistical meeting, this assembly was important because it reveals the challenges, debates, and partial successes in consolidating a broad-based anti-mining movement. President Correa's strategy to govern through insults, threats, rumors, and divisions were addressed in the Assembly. Similar to the previous meeting, mestizo racism partially prevented the coalition from adopting resource *and* identity-based demands.

Threats made by Correa on his weekly radio stoked fiery disagreements over how the coalition should articulate its demands. Was the coalition going to publicly articulate its demands against Correa, which could imply a call to oust him from power or would the coalition reframe its demands away from Correa's governments? Salvador Quishpe, from the lowland anti-mining struggle made the opening remarks initiated the debate that dominated the first hour of the meeting.

"The President has said that we are two hundred—thank you very much for saying that we are 200, at least we exist. But, we know that we are not 200; we are more. We are thousands and thousands of thousands of compañeros. They have minimized us, as they have always tried to minimize the pueblo. [...] Here we are not fighting against the president; he has the obligation to take a stand and defend the country, defend the Ecuadorian people. And we demand that he fulfill this obligation. Our struggle is to

defend our territories, defend the water, defend the hills where our sheep graze—as in the case of the Ecuadorian highlands; to defend our territories where our yuca, our banana is planted in the case of the Amazon, ...our cows, our cascades, our rivers...where the brothers Shuar live, where we the Saraguro live, the Cañari's, the mestizo pueblo.”

Salvador tried to make a persuasive call for unity in spite of Correa's attempts to minimize the anti-mining coalition. However, he called for the coalition to unite around nature and not against the President. This was a contentious proposal, especially for those in the National Coordinating Committee. For instance, Jesus from a community in Molleturo—to the west of Cuenca—facing a Canadian mining project objected.

“with five pounds of rice and two kilos of sugar [the government] tries to buy the conscience of the people. That is what they are doing in the countryside so that people will shut up and that's why we have to be against the president. All of it supports the mining companies, so that the pueblo, the campesinos, don't say anything. Don't come here and say that we are not against the president, when the president is causing such tremendous problems in the communities, trying to divide us and say that we are just four bastards.”

Jesus was enraged at the idea that the struggle would not also target Correa. The Bono Solidario and Alimentate Ecuador, Correa's well advertised food and cash programs for the poorest, were causing some problems in the South. Rumors circulated in the

countryside that if families signed up for Correa's free food or social security programs and tried to protest mining development the government would take away their aid. Silvia who worked with campesinos in Cañar, one of the poorest provinces in the South tried to encourage the compañeros to do both—to take advantage of the food programs that they have a right to access *and* also continue to protest mining development.

The debate over Correa was not resolved in the meeting but formed part of a complex set of political questions about the coalition and how connections among the various organizations would be achieved. Some people—primarily affiliated of the *Coordinadora* continued to call for a radical action against the government—a prolonged road-blockade, but others said that there were not the political conditions to do so. Abelardo, a young and energetic compañero was from Mindo, just outside of Quito where companies were also conducting mineral exploration. He affirmed his opposition to mining development but added, “the government has a lot of support and more than anything misinformation.” He heard an Assembly member say that large-scale mining causes less impact than small or artisanal mining.

David continued, “Here in the cities people are also supporting mining because they believe that mining will develop the country—the discourse that the president is managing.” His group proposed a creative alternative to the traditional road blockade, “we can organize a big concert in the middle of a major road to raise awareness of the mining problem and to counter all of the [positive] myths around mining development.”

People feared that Correa's popularity would work against them—that road blockades or radical measures would not garner public sympathy or support.¹²² Rolando's proposals made would not be a direct confrontation to the president and opened space for other compañeros from communities that were still learning about the negative impacts of mining development to speak up in support for creative forms of protest as an alternative to a road blockade. This approach represented one creative solution to the double-bind of how to challenge a popular president while at the same time protesting some of his measures.

As leaders and representatives made efforts to strike a delicate balance between their criticisms of the government and how to move forward in the coalition, the question of the government's divisive tactics continued to be a relevant theme. Notably absent at the meeting was Marlon Santi, president of CONAIE, and representatives of ECUARUNARI. It was perhaps no surprise that Lina was quick to point out their absence when she made the following observations:

“the president of CONAIE and representatives of ECUARUNARI were in Quito...Today was the day that we would ratify the road blockade and confirm each organizations

122 Correa's popularity was on the rise especially after his response to a Colombian military attack on a FARC encampment located in Ecuador's northern Sucumbíos province. In March 2008, the President cut diplomatic relations with neighbor Colombia, when the Colombian military bombed and killed 25 people, including Raul Reyes, FARC's second in command and several Ecuadorians (Burneo Sevilla 2008). Correa immediately ordered the expulsion of the Colombian ambassador out of the country, mobilized Ecuadorian troops to secure the border, and called for an exhaustive investigation into the incident (Burneo Sevilla 2008). Correa effectively framed the bombing as an attack on the territorial sovereignty of the country, implicated the US in backing the Colombian bombing, and effectively mobilizing nationalist sentiments in the public.

commitment to be part of these actions. In this meeting we want it to be clear: who is going to participate in the action and who is not. Our organization is to organize a road-blockade on the 21st, we will be out in the streets. [...] We would like to know the position of CONAIE, ECUARUNARI, and the two campesino organizations.”

It turned out that a few days prior to the meeting, President Correa and the Alianza País gave their official backing to CONAIE’s demands for declaring Ecuador a Plurinational State. This did not mean that the state had accepted CONAIE’s proposal but engaged in discussions for fleshing out the parameters of the proposals, surely a result of the on-going negotiations that started after CONAIE’s 30,000-person march in Quito.¹²³ CONAIE and ECUARUNARI’s absence provoked criticism among some of the *Coordinadora* members who accused, in hush tones before the start of the meeting, CONAIE leaders of selling out to the government, and of not being “*firmes*.” Lina simply articulated, what some of the women like Mari were already thinking.

Lucas Galindo from the anti-mining movement in the northern highlands came in representation of Auki Tituaña. He took the microphone and answered Lina’s concerns.

“we have listened to certain people, and I think with good reason they have asked, what is going on with the compañeras and compañeros from CONAIE, from ECUARUNARI. You already know the agreements announced, apparent agreements until now...to enable the recognition of the plurinational State. There are people that say—they have also sent

123 El Mercurio, “Espaldarazo a Reconocimiento Plurinacionalidad,” April 10, 2008.

me emails, 'Easy, compañeros, with the plurinationality things will be decided by the pueblos,' I think for my part that it is true, but it's not an absolute truth. [...] We have to keep working on the issue of plurinationality...to include the mestizo pueblo, the black pueblo, the montubio pueblo, without excluding water as the central axis [...] We don't know if this is going to stay in the constitution until the final day, it could be that they are playing us, we don't know.

Lucas continued to caution the assembly with statements that turned out to be prophetic.

"it's possible that...the government will emit the mining mandate to demobilize us, like it has done with the plurinational state. We have to be clear, our demand is not—well, for the short-run it is the mining mandate yes---but what happens if the mandate reverts all of the concessions and then, the final draft of the constitution opens the door for medium and large-scale metal mining development? Nothing will have changed, compañeros."

While Lucas recognized that plurinationality as an important political achievement, he was unconvinced that plurinational recognition would be enough to dismantle extractive industries. Mateo from Acción Ecológica disagreed. Mateo had frizzy, grown out light brown hair, glasses, scruffy beard, and loose fitting clothes. Though he was not from Ecuador, he had lived in the country for a many years active in the indigenous and environmental movement. He called on people to be patient with the national indigenous

movement and proposed that the nascent coalition adopt plurinationality as part of its political platform.

“hydroelectric dams and mining issues are not yet part of the central demands of older organizations representing campesinos and indigenous people, like the campesino social security, ECUARUNARI or even CONAIE, but they are listening, and that’s why we have to remember that this is a process of creating national unity is only in its first moment...we should not be criticizing [them], we should be patient.”

Luis continued:

“From my point of view, the state’s recognition via the Constituent Assembly, of a plurinational state is a huge step forward in this white-mestizo racist society. [...] and I think in that in the process of national unity we should establish as one of its elements the recognition of plurinationality...we should say to CONAIE, ‘Congratulations, your historical struggle is coming to fruition.’ And, also remind them that plurinationality is not sufficient without territory, without an economic model that permits---that is not based on an extractive model—but an economy for the long run.”

I shared Luis’ perception that the recognition of plurinational state had a potential transformative nature, but the other groups remained silent on the proposal to adopt plurinationality as a central part of the political agenda. Again, the question of mestizo racism seemed to at work here because people from within the *Coordinadora* regarded

the recognition of a plurinational state as a way to divide indigenous organizations from the emerging nature defense coalition. Although the question of plurinationality would be adopted in the Assembly's final platform, it was not a point that was widely embraced by my closest collaborators who I felt were disregarding the importance of recognizing historical forms of injustice and discrimination through the imposition of a unified mestizo state. Plurinationality was not just about constructing a multicultural state, but was about opening a space where indigenous forms of organizing territory and administration over that territory could be negotiated. Interestingly, plurinationality was formed one of the final resolutions of the Quito assembly, but in the Cuenca meeting the demands for plurinationality disappeared.¹²⁴

In the Quito meeting, Marlon Santi told us that the government had directly asked them if they would participate in road blockades. He believed that Correa feared CONAIE's participation in an uprising. It could have been in the interest of Correa's government to avoid a massive indigenous strike at all costs so as to not derail the Constituent Assembly—his key political platform for social transformation and a source of his popularity, and thereby agree to lend official support for a plurinational state, whose parameters could be more open or closed.

Or, CONAIE leaders could have also capitalized on calls for a road-blockade as a leverage to get plurinationality written into the constitution, and then from there, later

124 The final resolutions circulated by email mentioned 1) ratification of the need to consolidate a process of unity, 2) a rejection of President Correa's smear campaign, and 3) ratification of a 24 hour action to demand the annulment of the mining and hydroelectric projects, the closure of the project "Puerto Cobre" and the defense of social and environmental rights. "Agreements of the Peoples' Assembly," April 14th, 2008, circulated through email.

negotiate with the government questions of collective territorial rights that would address emerging concerns over mining, hydroelectric dams, logging, and shrimp farming.

Whether the adoption of plurinationality came from the state or CONAIE or a bit of both, it remained clear that CONAIE and ECUARUNARI were out of the coalition, at least for the April mobilizations.

After several hours, the environmental organizations agreed to organize a “National Day of Action” on the 21st of April, which could include road closures as well as marches and concerts.

THE MINING MANDATE

On April 18th, only four days after the second installment of the Peoples’ Assembly, the ANC emitted the much-anticipated mining mandate. The mandate was an ostensible win for the nascent environmental coalition. Written by a progressive sect of assembly members, including environmental lawyer Norman Wray—one of my former co-workers at a human rights organization—the historic piece of legislation was approved by 95 of the 130 members of the ANC.¹²⁵ The sweeping reform promised to bring under state control approximately 80% of the more than 4,000 mineral concessions held by multinational and national mining companies. Incorporating the demands of activists, the mandate reverted mining concessions found in headwaters, protected forests, or those which lacked consultation with local community members back to the state without economic recompense.¹²⁶

125 El Comercio, “El funcionario dejó en ‘standby’ el sector de la minería.” April 19, 2008.

126 Mandato Constituyente No. 6, Asamblea Constituyente Nacional, signed by Alberto Acosta

The mandate also ordered the reversion of concessions that were acquired by past government officials who used insider information to make potentially lucrative mining investments, as well as those that had not paid yearly patents. Moreover, the constituent mandate placed a moratorium on new mining concessions and set the stage for the formation of a National Mining Company to carry out mining development under conditions that preserves the environment and respects the rights of the *pueblos*. The response by the coalition was decidedly mixed.

Coordinadora leaders, so adamant about staging a road blockade, called off the action and instead convened their base organizations at Cuenca's central park on the 21st of April. People taped their hand-written signs around the wrought iron *glorieta* until it was a patchwork of radical declarations: Victoria doesn't give up dammit! Cochapata in defense of our patrimony! Molleturo doesn't shut up or back down! Several of us spoke amongst each other, worried about what the mandate really meant: was this an end to IAMGOLD's mineral project or would the government simply continue to sponsor the four major mineral projects causing so much conflict? Julia, for instance, believed it was a moment to celebrate the win. Though she knew that the mandate was only in paper, she didn't think it was the time to be protesting. "This is a big step forward," she commented, "It's a victory for our struggle."¹²⁷ She believed that it was a significant advancement because the annulment of the mineral concessions "was a recuperation of sovereignty...an ending of the old practices...that sought to pilfer the country."¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Fieldnotes, April 22, 2008.

¹²⁸ Interview with Jennifer Moore, April 21, 2008.

Julia told me that it was time that *Coordinadora* initiate new forms of activism to ensure that the mining mandate would be implemented like another technical or scientific study to substantiate the protection of the Quimsacocha páramo, “but they won’t listen” she commented.¹²⁹ The tensions were apparent between she and others. Benjamín, Fernando, and even Mari all believed that the mining mandate was a ruse, “to demobilize people,” as Fernando told me in disgust.¹³⁰

Lina was the first to start the ‘mitin’ as the gathering was called. She took the microphone and whipped the crowd to a frenzy. Multinational mining companies out! Long live Ecuador free of large-scale mining! The crowd responded enthusiastically to her chants, and then quieted down when she paused.

*“The Mining Mandate picks up many of the demands we have been making, but we are not going to fall into the trap of a triumphant celebration. At nine o’clock this morning, the Minister of Energy and Mines said that he was leaving a draft of the new mining law at the National Constituent Assembly. We have to be clear that the goal to open [the mining sector] to multinational companies and to industrial mining still exists. We have to continue our struggle.”*¹³¹

¹²⁹ Fieldnotes, April 22, 2008.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Recorded by Jennifer Moore, April 21, 2008.

Several community leaders followed her speech and easily jumbled the ANC and the government and mining companies into a single cause for suspicion. One man, from Cuenca, for is illustrated a common perception of the mandate.

“Lets not be illusioned. A new mining law for what? For whom? and by whom? Renegotiate mining contracts isn’t [the same] as annul them. The suspension [of the mining concessions] only guarantees the deception of the pueblos.

Activists either framed the mandate as a ruse to advance mining interests or cautiously celebrated it. The *Coordindaora*’s rally was temporary interrupted by a march led by a coalition of rural drinking water-boards in Azuay. Many didn’t dare applaud the march organized by Carlos Pérez as it passed by. The water board march was filled with campesinos waving blue flags with UNAGUA scrawled across them. It was a celebratory march; just as other activists were doing in Quito. I spotted Rosita and another young man in the march and watched them jump out and join the *Coordinadora* rally. I laughed to myself thinking about how Rosita, among the most embittered by the 3,200 hectares, joined the water board’s march. The boundaries between the two organizations were much more fluid than I had believed.

State and Industry pacts?

The diversity in activist responses to the Mining Mandate was also related to the very contradictory nature of the Mandate. The Mandate annulled most if not all the mineral concessions in the country. But, the Minister of Energy and Mines declared that

the mandate would only “reorganize” the mining industry.¹³² Even if multinational mining companies would not lose all of their investments, they were still concerned about the safety and security of their investments. Many companies saw their shares drop after the announcement. A few companies left the country and others—such as those who had not paid patent rights—had their concessions annulled. By and large, the biggest impact on the mining industry was a delay in their anticipated project start dates. No company could resume work—that is, conduct exploratory drilling or carry out feasibility studies—until the country had a new mineral law and signed a new set of contracts with the mining companies, if at all. This ended up placing IAMGOLD’s project at least two years behind schedule. In other words, the mining mandate was not simply a rouse, but cast tremendous doubt as to how Correa would move forward with the mining sector. Moreover, given that the Mandate developed legal grounds for establishing the National Mining Company, it was possible that the government could sideline multinational mining companies altogether.

As a response to this uncertainty, multinational companies especially those from Canada, as well as the Canadian Ambassador met with Correa to ensure their investments in the country remained safe. Correa, wanting to keep Canadian investment in the country, celebrated Canadian companies as a potential benefit for the county by stating :

¹³² El Comercio, “La Minería solo entró en un proceso de reacomodo” Interview with Galo Chiriboga, Minister of Mines and Petroleum, April 21, 2008.

*“Canada is a country with one of the greatest environmental riches worldwide, with the biggest freshwater reserves in the world...and it turns out that 15% of Canada’s GDP comes from mining. The problem is knowing how to do it.”*¹³³

While he framed the Canadian industry as an example of sustainable mining, activist called for the full implementation of the Mining Mandate, including the annulment of IAMGOLD’s Quimsacocha mineral concessions among others. Furthermore, for activists, it did not matter whether mining projects were owned and managed by the state or multinational companies. One compañero during the *Coordinadora* rally said, *“A state mining company is like disguising the wolf in sheep’s clothing.”*¹³⁴ Whether at the hands of state or multinational mining companies, activists believed that any kind of mining expansion would still risk contaminating farmer water sources and dispossessing people from their lands. In response, President Correa labeled anti-mining activists as turncoats: self-interested subversives working for foreign interests that do not want Ecuador to develop its own mining industry.¹³⁵

The mandate as well as the wave of anti-mining activism could have provided the government with political leverage needed to pressure mining companies to cede to some state demands, but it was still unclear whether multinational companies or the state would set the terms of mining development. What did seem apparent was that multinational companies would have a hand in developing the mining law.

133 President Rafael Correa, “Enlace Ciudadano: National Radio Address” April 26, 2008.

134 Ibid.

135 President Rafael Correa, “Enlace Ciudadano: National Radio Address” April 26, 2008

ANC and the Question of Consultation

Contentious and mixed responses to the mandate made visible the multiple, overlapping and contradictory nationalist projects being conceptualized and debated. The Coalition conceptualized a political project that drew from global rights based frameworks and nationalist rhetoric to demand that indigenous and non-indigenous people's territorial rights be respected; whereas Correa sought to implement a nationalist project influenced by a traditional Latin American left that placed state interests over communities and their rights.

The tension between these two competing nationalist projects were evident in April 2008 when disputes over how the new constitution would recognize the right to consultation in extractive industries erupted in the ANC. These disputes occurred in the same week that the Mining Mandate was emitted. Mónica Chuji, president of the Natural Resources working group, sustained that community consultation rights be recognized in the constitution as binding to place communities as the ultimate decision-makers for whether a project moves forward or not.¹³⁶ In contrast, Assembly member Pachano, also from the Acuerdo País, sustained that "the opinion of the population cannot prevail over the opinion of the state."¹³⁷ Correa was called in to settle the disputes. Correa favored the position that indigenous people be granted non-binding consultation rights.¹³⁸ Environmental and Indigenous rights activists grew furious with this position.

¹³⁶ La Hora, "Convicciones ambientalistas dividen a Acuerdo País," April 23, 2008.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Mario Melo, a mestizo lawyer at the Quito-based Pachamama Foundation and part of the Peoples' Assembly process reflected on the question of consultation rights in an email he circulated. Melo argues that the question of consultation rights should not be up for discussion because the Ecuadorian system already recognizes consultation rights in the constitution of 1998, and binding consultation rights under the UN's Declaration of Indigenous Peoples.¹³⁹ He characterized a non-binding consultation right as a "regressive measure prohibited by the Juridical System."

Referring to the opponents, such as Correa, he stated "such positions are profoundly discriminatory because they obligate the poorest people to sacrifice themselves in favor of a development model that excludes them. Just as oil, mining, and forests, water is also found in indigenous, black and poor campesino territories."¹⁴⁰ And asked, what if the tables were turned, "would they still agree to come into the homes, offices, businesses of the wealthy who live and work in the city...to extract resources that interested the state, without a consultation? Surely, not."¹⁴¹ He called attention to the ways in which non-binding consultation rights intersect with racist and classist ideologies.

He ended by observing that the ANC appears to be willing to write Nature's rights and Plurinationality into the new constitution as long as they are "empty gestures" that do not interfere with the most powerful economic and political groups in the country that

139 Melo, Mario "Consulta y Consentimiento Previo se debaten en la Asamblea Constituyente del Ecuador" April 23, 2008, received via email.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

have ruled since the 1970s.¹⁴² Even though the nature's rights are celebrated as a decolonial measure that fundamentally challenge the premise of western political ontology (see de la Cadena 2010), they do not guarantee indigenous rights to natural resources and territory. The ANC debated and approved nature's rights in the constitution without the same contentious debate regarding binding consultation rights.

CONCLUSION

This chapter followed the political dynamics between the state and anti-mining movements in the context of mining reforms. I followed women and men from Victoria del Portete and Tarqui affiliated with the National Coordinating Committee as they undertook several political actions to demand that the ANC emit the Mining Mandate—a progressive piece of interim legislation to overturn the majority of concessions, especially those belonging to the four largest, most lucrative and conflictive mineral projects planned in southern Ecuador. Their activism—empowered by women's anti-mining organizing—was met with gendered forms of state violence that sought to control their opposition to mining development but only sparked renewed efforts to develop coalitions with other resource extractive movements also facing repression and disillusionment with the Correa administration.

Resource extractive movements grounded in place but corresponding to different racial, ethnic, and class-based identities, attempted to create alliances across heterogeneous differences. In following two meetings, one in Quito and the other in Cuenca, I found that in spite of efforts to create a unified national movement, activists

¹⁴² Ibid.

found themselves confronted with two key predicaments. The first was related to their relationship to the national indigenous movement represented by CONAIE. A combination of internalized mestizo racism as well as differences in political strategy made it difficult for the National Coordinating Committee affiliates and base members to support CONAIE's political agenda to seek plurinational recognition in the constitution as a primary way of securing territorial and resource control. Second, the diverse set of activists had to develop a collective strategy over how to best move forward under Correa's administration given both his overwhelmingly high political popularity *and* his persistent call for mineral extraction on indigenous, afro, and mestizo lands. Two primary positions emerged, where some advocated for a nation-wide uprising against the president while others wanted to direct their efforts not against the president but for reform in the ANC. Both were valuable strategies with their own merits and risks. Farmer and rural activists attempt to untangle these binds by organizing actions that made space for the diversity of proposals, interests and ideological positions that did not necessarily correspond to any pre-given identities such as rural/urban or ethnic/race and class.

As this chapter demonstrates, the double-binds facing activists were structured largely by emergent forms of governing practices under the Correa administration. Correa's administration—comprised of a network of individuals and institutions—mobilized police repression, rumors, insults, and nationalist discourses to frame mining activists as turncoats, whose collective political actions were damaging to the sovereignty of the nation and benefited the elite oligarchy that has dominated Ecuadorian politics

and/or an international cadre of mining companies who didn't want Ecuador to develop a national-managed industry. Repressive state forces sparked outrage and mobilized the diverse group of campesino and urban activists, helping to materialize a collectivity against resource extractive struggles.

The potential power of the activist coalition—with key contacts in the ANC—helped propel the ANC to emit the Mining Mandate—a historic piece of legislation that met all of the anti-mining demands for overturning mineral concessions back to the state. Yet, the power of the Mandate was undermined by a state imperative to develop a national industry with the possible collaborations with multinational industries.

Ironically, just as the activists won concessions from the ANC's Mining Mandate, the temporary alliances among some of the place-based resource movements dissolved. The Peoples' Assembly and even the *Coordinadora's* own internal organization was pulled apart in the months that followed over disagreements as to whether to vote yes in the constitutional referendum held in the September 2008. Some argued that the constitution reflected most of indigenous, women's, and environmental movement demands, but others argued that it would pave the way for resource extraction; it did both. The Peoples' Assembly processes resumed in October 2009, when the state attempted to draft and write a new mining law that promoted the contentious industry.

Chapter 4: Connecting and constituting post-neoliberal state subjectivities

INTRODUCTION

After the mining mandate was emitted, the Correa administration concentrated on its efforts on the drafting a new mineral law. The state sought to increase its control and economic revenues over natural resources. As part of this transformation in resource use regimes, the Correa administration has created a compelling language and imagery that assembles a group of people into proponents for mineral extraction. Correa's use of catch phrases, nationalist discourses, and false accusations against mining activists presented another predicament for the anti-mining movement. Can activists—divided after the mining mandate—re-emerge as a unified political force that effectively garners enough public support to effectively challenge Correa's proposed mineral law? Or, has the Correa effectively shaped collective subjectivities in ways that will support mineral extraction. Set against the debates over the mining law, I show how the state becomes constituted and constructed under the Correa regime and follow its effects for the anti-mining movement.

THE 'MINING MONOLOGUE' IN CUENCA: FRAMING THE MINING LAW

"Today we begin a transcendental process," said Undersecretary of Mines Jose Serrano from the podium, "...a process that is historic for this country. In reality," he continued, "as its name suggests, [the national mining dialogue aims] to construct a dialogue from these tables that you sit in today. The national government will respect

your observations, including all of your comments and doubts regarding the technical, legal, environmental, social and economic aspects...to construct a 'true' mining law.” With these words, Serrano, my former co-worker at the human rights organization I worked with in 2000 and then-Undersecretary of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, opened the National Mining Dialogue in Cuenca in May 2008.

Briefly, National Mining Dialogue was first conceptualized in April 2007, under then Minister of Mines and Petroleum Alberto Acosta.¹⁴³ The Mining Dialogues sought to develop possible solutions to the escalating disputes over mining extraction (Cisneros 2008). Its original stated purpose had been to understand the social and environmental impacts of mining activities through dialogue with small-scale miners and communities affected by large-scale mining activity (Cisneros 2008). The National Mining Dialogue held the promise to overcome conflicts over mining extraction, but community activists, particularly those involved in the *Coordinadora*, called the legitimacy of the dialogue into question when multinational mining companies were invited to participate in the May 2007 forum.

The National Mining Dialogue process was reactivated in 2008, shortly after the release of the Mining Mandate. This time, the dialogue was to generate a broad level of participation from civil society groups, small-scale miners, and the industrial mining industry to establish the foundation of a new mining legislation. The Correa administration sought to develop the mining industry to implement its social solidarity

143 By this time, the Ministry of Energy and Mines had been renamed as the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum.

development model, whereby the state government would receive a greater amount of profits to finance social welfare projects such as education, healthcare, the building of roads, and so forth (Cisneros 2008).

Representatives from Ministry of Mines and Petroleum along with other state institutions travelled throughout the country to cities including Cuenca, Loja, Zaruma, Machala, Quito, and others to engage with a diverse group of actors regarding the new Mining Law. The meeting in Cuenca was specifically convened to generate proposals from civil society organizations. However, approximately 80% of those in attendance, mostly dressed in business casual, represented employees and consultants linked to the mining industry.¹⁴⁴

The National Mining Dialogue meeting failed to generate participation from activists and campesinos opposed to mining development. Correa kicked off the mining dialogues with the presence of multinational corporation representatives. His support for mining development in spite of the Mining Mandate sparked a radicalization of the political discourses and actions of the *Coordinadora* of which included the total rejection of the National Mining Dialogue. The organization leaders rejected the National Mining Dialogue calling it a ‘farce,’ an insincere attempt to creating the illusion of democratic participation and reform. They believed that it could “legitimate a mining law that will only open up mineral projects of death.”¹⁴⁵ During Serrano’s speech, the chants of campesinos protesters affiliated with the *Coordinadora* stood outside of the building,

144 Ciudadana Informada, May 14th 2008, “Diálogo Minero provocó protestas en Cuenca,” http://www.ciudadaniainformada.com/provincias/noticias-azuay-ecuador/azuay-ecuador-noticias/browse/20/ir_a/regional/article//dialogo-minero-provoco-protestas-en-cuenca.html

145 http://nomineria.blogspot.com/2008_05_01_archive.html, accessed June 15, 2012.

shouting, “You don’t sell the country, you defend it,” and “Down with the Mining Dialogue.” Even Carlos Perez from the Unified Community Water Boards of Azuay (UNAGUA) rejected the dialogue. “We were not invited [to participate] in spite of being *the* principal actors here,” he told me. “Everyone here is pro-mining,” he added and stepped out before Serrano started his speech, dubbing the dialogue a “mining monologue.”

I attended the Cuenca meeting with severe trepidation. New to the field, I hoped to gain a better understanding of state nationalist discourses in the mining industry. At the same time, I wanted to remain in solidarity with the anti-mining movement, specifically the women’s organization affiliated with the *Coordinadora* with whom I collaborated. I mentioned my planned attendance to the *Coordinadora* leadership but I didn’t realize at the time they would simultaneously hold a protest outside. I being inside at the meeting, instead of being with protestors, raised some questions about my research. Later, in September of 2008, I was formally asked to leave the *Coordinadora*. Though my participation in the meeting was not specifically named as the cause for the ending of my collaboration with the organization, there were moments such as this one where my research interest in examining the contradictory discourses of the state was opposed to their own policy of no-state engagement.

Inside, participants were divided into thematic tables addressing different aspects of the mining law: environment, economic, legal, social, technical, and small-scale mining. I decided to join the “*mesa social*” organized around the theme of “Participation and Consultation.” I recorded the meeting with the permission of everyone involved. Each

table was set up with chairs and a corresponding folder containing a notepad, a hardly legible copy of a ‘skeleton’ of the mining law developed by the MMP, and a pen.

Nationalist multinationals

While a strengthened state is often seen as a challenge to capitalist enterprise, the mining dialogue showed, in fact, how mining companies may also look for strong state intervention to regulate and control mining opposition. Mining companies, who had met with President Correa in April 2008 made an appearance at the meeting looking to contain the influence that anti-mining activists could exercise over parts of the state apparatus, but they did so by performing Ecuadorianness—by conjuring up and enacting nationalist sentiments that both justified their presence at a “civil society” meeting and pursued multinational mining interests.

The participants at my table included two representatives from Cornerstone Resources (holds mining concessions in Quimsacocha, adjacent to IAMGOLD’s project), one from Curimining (a subsidiary of Salazar Resources), two mining company consultants, two state representatives and a young woman from Nabon, Azuay in favour of mining. Although nearly all worked for foreign mining companies, they were Ecuadorians, as Ramiro from Cornerstone pointed out.

“Except for the *compañera* Teresa,” he said, “if I am not mistaken, we are all Ecuadorian here. I think our principal objective, more than just being representatives of companies—well, we all are company functionaries—but, more than functionaries, we are Ecuadorians. I think that we should, in our discussions today, guarantee that Ecuador

come out wining...we as Ecuadorians have to fight too, yes, so that Ecuador comes out winning.

His statements struck me. Multinational corporations were easily represented by activists as directed by and working towards foreign interests. Ultimately, his positioning as an Ecuadorian may not detract from this representation, but shows a more complex picture: multinational companies are comprised of Ecuadorians with ways of engaging the state that blur boundaries between national citizenship and multinational interests. Ramiro's call for "Ecuador to come out winning" echoed the nationalist sentiments that had come to organize mining debates, but he later directed his commentary to support the interests of multinational companies.

During a discussion about participation, Ramiro summed up the general consensus. "The state should guarantee that the company can do its processes of participation, information dissemination, and communication. It's not right that the state gives a concession and then washes its hands of the rest." In his view, the law obligates companies to generate citizen participation, but does not guarantee the necessary conditions to do this. "The state limits itself to obligating, not guaranteeing, [participation]," he continued, "and I think that needs to change." In other words, now speaking as a multinational company representative, he argued that the state should relieve corporations of with the sole burden of generating community participation.

An employee of Curimining, a company that has contentious projects in the provinces of Los Ríos and Bolívar, agreed but went a step further. Elena proposed that the state should be responsible for socializing mining projects and to "control radical

environmental groups” that spread “false arguments” in communities. First, she explained that when the company arrives to disseminate the project terms of reference in accordance to Ecuadorian citizen participation regulations, that environmental groups, “very far from the communities” have already come in and convinced the community that mining is bad. She notes, “many times in these...poor communities the majority of people have a maximum second grade education. How can we require them to understand us as technicians [when they have] very vague ideas like if one extract gold is like extracting blood from the body and the earth won’t be any good...so how do you tell people it’s not like that....when you have a long history of environmental groups doing presentations all the time?” she rhetorically asks the group, concluding, “citizen participation is no longer viable.”

Elena proposed that the state take on the sole responsibility of carrying out a socialization process with affected communities through the creation of a Ministry of Social Participation to spearhead information dissemination and participation, not just in the mining sector but other extractive industries as well.

Second, after some more discussion from other participants, Elena proposed that the law include a clause to control radical environmental groups. She described a case in which her company's installations were attacked by radical groups:

“[They] attacked, sequestered, assaulted, and destroyed houses destroyed everything and then afterwards they were given amnesty. So where’s the law? We are not talking about people simply coming out to defend the environment with their placards...

environmentalism is no longer environmentalism, its terrorism, its vandalism, its anarchy and we are not living in a country like that. We are in a democratic country.”

By highlighting incidents of direct action protests that had turned violent as anti-democratic, she called for the law and the Ecuadorian state to control radical opposition groups with the law. This call was picked up in the draft law as I discuss later in this chapter. Echoing the words of President Correa and the Governor Larriva, Elena also propagated the rumor that the actions of anti-mining leaders corresponded to foreign interests. “She added, “They have leaders, and these leaders should be investigated and [see] well what are their ends? But no law exists for this.” Though she did not say it, she was speaking about the *Coordinadora* leaders—among the most visible and radical anti-mining group at that time. Her attack on leaders whose actions correspond to “foreign” interests made little sense given that Elena was an employee of a Toronto-based mining corporation. Yet in this case, the repetition of the idea of anti-mining leaders corresponding to “foreign interests” was part of performing nationalist sentiments that establish the material links between corporations and the Correa administration.

Moreover, Elena disregarded historical struggles over resource and community rights as pure manipulation. She believed that the community people were “not at fault” because “they don’t know what they are doing.” Unacknowledged white-mestizo racism cast indigenous and campesino people as simple, naive, or without full mental capabilities who were manipulated by people with “outside” interests.

In fact, nationalist discourses such as those mobilized by the state were often coded with racist ideologies of mestizaje that were also, ironically, prevalent among some of the protest groups. The discussion centered primarily on participation but for a brief instant, the question of consultation was brought up. I defended binding consultation rights, but Raul, linked to the mining industry, rejected the idea by mobilizing nationalist refrains common in Correa's weekly radio show.

“Personally, over this issue, I think we are all owners of resources, not just one social group. What would you think if I found gold underneath my house and say, no this belongs to me? No, I am sorry that belongs to the State. We are all [Ecuadorian], whether we've been here 100, 200, 500 years, we are all Ecuadorians and we have the same rights to those resources.”

His coded response, that “we are all Ecuadorians” was reminiscent of Correa's phrases such as “We are all patria” and the “Patria belongs to everyone.” This reinforced white mestizo racism against indigenous and campesino peoples who drew attention to colonial processes and ancestral ties to land as arguments for sovereignty over natural resources. It dismissed historical processes that connected Ecuador's diverse society in asymmetrical relations, and instead propagated a color-blind national myth of equality constitutive of mestizo nationalism. As much as mestizo racism was held by some within the *Coordinadora* it was also part of state nationalist discourses appropriated by multinational mining company representatives.

Similar to Ramiro, Jose Luis positioning himself as an Ecuadorian, conjuring up citizenship rights that should give him claims to hotly contested natural resources. And, again, nationalist sentiments were followed up with arguments to relinquish multinational mining companies with the responsibility of holding participation forums similar to what Elena proposed.

“I want to end saying that—on this issue of participation—I think we have to relinquish the responsibility or that total burden of citizen participation from mining companies. Compañeras, Compañeros, this is not the obligation of the company. If you invite [people] and they don’t participate, don’t say that we have not done ‘citizen participation’ [...] It’s not that the company doesn’t invite people or just invites one. No. In one case the Church said I don’t want to participate, I don’t want to go but then they complained. Social organizations, the government, and the company all have the obligation to guarantee citizen participation, but of those three I think the company is least responsible.”

At one point during the discussion, a campesino man abruptly came to the table and sat down. He offered a different understanding of nationalism. “We have sworn before the flag to defend, not to sell our water, not to sell our Fatherland. I say this with honour at this table; we do not accept one step towards mining, thank you.” Then he got up and left the room. Luis was later held up as a case in point of the challenges facing mining companies and the need for greater state intervention, but the contents of his argument

were never considered. After all, as one of the consultants, said, “The discussion is not whether mining will happen. What’s in debate is *how* it’s going to happen.”

Though the mining dialogue was promoted as a transparent democratic process for generating a democratic legal reform, pacts between state and multinationals undermined its credibility and closed off possibilities for the implementation of Mining Mandate reforms into the law. In crafting the legislation, Ecuadorians working for multinational companies invoked nationalist-related discourse to overcome political opposition in ways that neither the state nor companies would have to seriously engage with arguments against mining extraction. In other words, rather than have a mining law that regulates mineral extraction, legal reforms promoted by the industry in this case were meant to control political opposition and disrupt efforts to build a nation-wide movements to challenge the extractive model. Arguments for greater control over opposition were underpinned with racist ideologies that reinforced mestizo nationalism. Given that it was heterogeneous group of farmers—not solely indigenous collective subjects—that were the main driving force against mining, racial ideologies—such as framing protestors as unruly and uncontrollable were used to racialized campesinos and argue that the state embark on a new civilizing mission.

A NOT SO FUNNY COMIC

A few months after the dialogue, the government published a comic on mining that reinforced the idea that protestors were serving the interests of international mining companies and suggested that Ecuador's extractive industry history would not repeat itself, as opponents worried. The comic, published by the government’s Secretariat for

Peoples, Social Movements, and Citizen Participation and entitled “Mining in Ecuador: a Source of Hope,”¹⁴⁶ was part of an on-going series of comics about changes underway in the Correa administration and titled “The Fatherland Belongs to Everyone.” This comic was the first one published about mining and a second one was published after the mining law was passed.¹⁴⁷

In the comic, a teacher retells the story of the conquest to her students, beginning with how the Spanish took their resources in exchange for “mirrors and trinkets.” The comic goes into a brief history of oil development, portraying images of Texaco’s toxic legacy in the Amazon. In an unconventional twist, the students tell their teacher that the history of oil development need not repeat itself with mining. According to the comic, with “well-managed” mining development, the history of plunder has a different ending. Rather than poverty and underdevelopment, mining can lead to “jobs, public works projects, and social services.”

Moreover, the comic mobilizes subaltern ways of understanding nature to promote mining extraction by personifying nature as a generous mother: “we should not hurt Pachamama. She is generous and deserving of our love and respect. She wants to give her riches to the benefit of her children.” Meanwhile, anti-mining protestors—turning their backs on the generosity of Pachamama— are portrayed as rudely interrupting the tale of modernity and development. In one picture, a Tsáchila man whispers to an afro-Ecuadorian woman that the protestors in the background are suspected of having interests

146Secretaría de los Pueblos, Movimientos Sociales, y Participación Ciudadana, “La Patria es de Todos” Series, Comic No. 8, “La Minería en Ecuador: Una fuente de esperanza.”

147 I opened my introduction to the dissertation with an analysis of the second comic that was published.

aligned with “the international mining industry that doesn’t want to see Ecuador as a competitor.”¹⁴⁸ In this tale, anti-mining protestors are blocking efforts to ‘development’ depicted with a brand new Health Center, a local official cutting a red ribbon to inaugurate a new building, men digging, and a newly paved road.

The Correa administration continued to question campesinos’ ‘hidden’ interests throughout the year, with particularly renewed vigour in October 2008, when a draft of the mineral law circulated.¹⁴⁹ During his October 11th national radio program, in a variant of the initial rumor, Correa suggested that protesters themselves are not just supported from outside, but that they themselves are impostors. “They are not even indigenous, nor people from the area,” he said, “They are people from the city, foreigners from NGOs whose bellies are full. They have their own visions and manipulate people to see that they become mirror images.”¹⁵⁰ Less than a year later, Correa’s administration order the closure of Acción Ecológica by revoking its legal person-hood on grounds that the organization had “deviated from the original ends for which it was constituted.”¹⁵¹ At the time of Correa’s radio accusations Victoria del Portete and Tarqui dairy farmers had very few links to international and national NGOs like Acción Ecológica.¹⁵² National

148 The comic shows a scene in which a Tsáfila man and Afro-Ecuadorian woman are commenting on the protestors in the background, and he tells her, “We don’t know if their position is sincere or if they respond to other interests. People say that there is a presence of foreign groups linked to the international mining industry who don’t want to see Ecuador as a competitor.”

149 Check dates of circulation of law.

150 President Rafael Correa, October 11th 2008, National Radio Address.

151 <http://www.accionecologica.org/la-clausura-de-ae-en-la-prensa/1096-ecologia-si-es-politica-no-al-cierre-de-accion-ecologica-en-ecuador> Accessed on June 16, 2012.

152 Campesinos from Victoria and Tarqui begin to participate again in broader anti-mining coalitions including NGO’s such as Acción Ecológica around the mining law, but they did not create strong relationships with the NGO until the following year during the debates over the water law.

Coordinating Committee leaders were skeptical of NGO's such as Acción Ecológica and the local movement was not sustained with NGO funding but by peoples own money as well as help from the wealthier dairy farmers.

ANOTHER TRY AT COALITION-BUILDING

By October, anti-mining activists, including priests, farmers, indigenous leaders, politicians, and environmentalists, began to hold meetings to develop strategies in an attempt to stop the new mining law. While the government had not been able to push the new mining bill into legislation as soon as it hoped, it was buoyed by an overwhelming victory in the national referendum to pass the new constitution on September 28th 2008. Correa's approval ratings hovered around 70%.¹⁵³ Important allies to the anti-mining movements, Mónica Chuji and Alberto Acosta, distanced themselves from Alianza País, due to differences with Correa's political project.¹⁵⁴ This scenario put campesino, indigenous, and environmental organizations at greater disadvantage as they began to mobilize against the law, presented to an interim legislative commission on November 14th, 2008.

The overall goal of the diverse anti-mining movement was to stop the draft law from being debated in the interim legislative Assembly. They sustained that the government needed to open up more debate over the law, and include the perspectives of communities that would be affected by mining development. As it stood, the draft law,

153 Cedatos/Gallup International, Quito, January 10th 2009, "Aprobación, Credibilidad y Actitud del Presidente entre Enero 2007 y Enero 2009" <http://www.cedatos.com.ec/contenido.asp?id=110>

154 See for instance, Reuters, Enrique Andres Pretel and Alonso Soto, June 23rd 2008, "Ecuador assembly head quits in constitution rift" <http://www.reuters.com/articlePrint?articleId=USN2341904520080623>

according to the activists, favored multinational corporations.¹⁵⁵ The draft law did not integrate community proposals to develop exclusionary zones that would be prohibited from mining development. Instead, the law enabled companies to develop mining projects in watersheds and protected forests, and allowed the state declare rural areas “public utility” for mining development, which would potentially usurp farmers and indigenous lands for mining development.

On the question of participation, the draft law echoed the calls of Ecuadorian multinational representatives, entrusting the Ecuadorian state with the sole responsibility of convening participation and non-binding consultation processes with local communities. Moreover, the draft law also responded to multinational calls to control radical opposition movements: it sanctioned people who tried to intervene with mining activities or trespassers to mining projects with a 5 year jail sentence and a \$40,000 fine. Essentially, it paved the way for the criminalization of direct action protest-related activities. All of this, led a lawyer and ally to the movement to describe mining development, as legislated under the draft law, as a dictatorial activity because there seemed to be now way of escaping it once it was determined a national economic development priority by the government.¹⁵⁶ The coalition of anti-mining activists affirmed that the law contradicted several articles of the new constitution including the

And, Upside Down World, Daniel Denvir, November 6th 2008, “Whither Ecuador? An interview with indigenous activist and politician Mónica Chuji” <http://upside-down-world.org/main/ecuador-archives-49/1563-whither-ecuador-an-interview-with-indigenous-activist-and-politician-monica-chuji>

155 See for instance, UNAGUA’s folleto on the Ley Minera as well as CEDENMA’s pamphlet titled, “Nueva Ley Minera, nefasta para el país, peligrosa para el agua, la naturaleza y el ambiente.”

156 Byron Real, “Análisis de la ley Minera” n.d. circulated via email/internet.

rights to nature and state guarantees to development based on *sumac kawsay*, or Living Well.

Efforts to reinitiate a unified anti-mining coalition group surfaced in October 2008, during the circulation of a draft of the mining law. The organizations were still reeling from the divisions enhanced by the national referendum process, whereby those affiliated with the *Coordinadora* opted to annul their vote for the constitution, while others such as environmental organization Acción Ecológica as well as the indigenous movement supported the constitution. Furthermore, fissures within the *Coordinadora* also emerged, when Julia advisor to the women's group decided to cast her vote in favor of the constitution.

On October 13th, 2008, Acción Ecológica and Salvador Quishpe's anti-mining group FRESMIGE tried to reactive the Peoples' Assembly process through convening a national meeting in Cuenca. The assembly was comprised of old and new allies: people from the anti-shrimp movement; a contingent working against oil and hydroelectric issues, dozens of representatives from place-based anti-mining struggles including Santa Isabel, Cañar, Gualaquiza, Pacto, Intag, Zamora, Chimborazo, Morona Santiago, among others as well as former assembly members Mónica Chuji and Martha Roldos; Cuencano and *gringo* allies as well as a several representatives from the national and highland and Amazonian indigenous organizations. Dairy farmers from Victoria del Portete and Tarqui were notably absent; the *Coordinadora* had convened their own assembly on the same day, raising suspicions among the organizers that the group tried to "boycott" the unification of the movement due to their own bitter resentments.

Briefly, the room was in full agreement that groups must reactivate a protest movement against the mining bill. People overwhelmingly agreed that the law violates community rights, and some even said that it was worse than the previous neoliberal law. One person called it “*regalona*” or a law that gives away too much, repeating language used to critique neoliberal policies. The point of heated debate was not so much about the mining law, but how the groups would coalesce together; who would lead the coalition and would the movement be specific to mining or framed against extractive industries. These questions remained only temporarily resolved earlier in the year (see previous chapter), and emerged again as a thorny set of agenda points that generated another round of passionate discussion among the group.

Salvador Quishpe and Lucía from Acción Ecológica called for CONIAE to lead the coalition movement against mining extraction. It appeared that Salvador had been putting pressure on CONAIE for the past month to play a proactive role in mining debates, and things seemed favorable. At a CONAIE press conference the previous month, Marlon Santi (CONAIE president) pressured the government to implement the mining mandate and said that they would consider an uprising after the September referendum. According to Salvador, CONAIE played a role in arranging the meeting; however, Marlon Santi and Humberto Cholango were absent. Only ECUARUNARI sent a lower level leader to attend the meeting, closing off the possibility for the national indigenous organization to take the reins of the anti-mining movement.

Internal disputes emerged in the indigenous movement as well. Whereas Domingo Ankuash, president of an Amazonian Shuar organization called on for direct,

action protest, the ECUARUNARI head of Territory division leader called for a greater socialization of the mining problem with their *bases* and said that their organization would have to consult them in order to undertake an uprising. This did not satisfy the 100 or so delegates gathered who were eager to organize an uprising. Salvador was angry that the leadership of the national indigenous movement was absent. In the heat of the moment he wondered whether it was time to break with old organizations and start a new national organization.

Correa's words appeared to shape the political strategies of upper level leadership. Salvador continued, "They kept us waiting two years, and every time we wanted a mobilization, leaders would say that it was playing into the hands of the right [wing]." Political binds—analyzed in the previous chapter—seemed to have an effect on CONAIE's own political practices. Quishpe denounced this, and Domingo agreed and went further. He began to critique upper level leadership for being "comfortable," supposedly "negotiating posts," and being manipulated by the government. Instead of calling for an identity-based agenda, he called for everyone to come together, all of the "excluidos," indígenas, colonos, mestizos, etc. The group had reached the frustrating limits of the national indigenous movement.

Coalition leaders turned to those who were ready to mobilize: environmentalists and farmer activists working against logging, shrimp industry, oil extraction, oil refineries, and hydroelectric projects in their territories as a way to expand the coalition. The impending uprising was framed as one against an economic model based on extractive industries, not just mining. Though everyone agreed to the uprising, it was

unclear the extent to which the political conditions and will existed in every place-based movement to carry it through. Regardless, the meeting marked an important moment in the regrouping of opposition. The draft mining bill sparked opposition that went beyond just a mining-only agenda, and created conditions for a national movement to emerge against an economic system.

Dairy Farmers and Water-boards March

Dairy farmers and the water boards marched through Cuenca streets on November 17th, 2008, just days after the draft of the mining law was sent to the interim legislation commission. I arrived to San Blas, a neighborhood in the eastern tip of central Cuenca, where marchers congregated. I knew the march was organized by the water boards, but I was not prepared to see what came next. As I walked up to join the protest, I heard Benjamin on the megaphone chanting. I smiled, in complete and total surprise. Fissures between the *Coordinadora* affiliates and the water-board organizations seemed to be unbridgeable, yet here was, not only Benjamin leading protest chants, but much of the women involved in the Defensoras de la Pachamama group, including Rosita and Rocio as well as the male members of the *Coordinadora*. Though Solano and Mejia were absent, the unification of the dairy farmers and water boards was momentous: it marked the beginning of a new alliance between some of the members of the two anti-mining groups that would last into the following year. When I asked Benjamin how it happened, he commented that they recognized that struggling alone wouldn't get them anywhere with the government, so they joined forces, calling for the shelving of the draft mining bill.

The march in Cuenca was part of a ‘national day of mobilization,’—as activists called it, with the participation of various movements that formed part of the Peoples’ Assembly coalition. Marches were reported in Quito, with the participation of thousands of people from various resource-related movements among others, as well as actions in Zamora Chinchipe, Morona Santiago, Bolivar, as well as Santa Isabel and Azogues in the South. Protestors closed roads in Santa Isabel and in Zamora, where former Pachakutik Assembly member Jorge Sarango was detained.¹⁵⁷

Even though the national indigenous movement was not among the most visible actor, members of CONAIE helped organize the action. For instance in Cuenca, the march was organized weeks before on November 8th with the participation of CONAIE and CONFENIAE leaders, who—like coalition members—argued for the unification of a popular movement—indigenous people, campesinos, artisans, transportation workers, and education sector, and with a diverse set of strategies and demands. Luis Yampis, delegate for CONAIE reported that the organization broke relations with the government on the 30th of October, but in spite of strong words against the government at the meeting, CONAIE maintained an ambivalent response to the mining law until January 2009.

SITTING ON A SACK OF GOLD

José Serrano, the Undersecretary of Mines, persistently told the media that the mining law had been “socialized” since April, implying that protestors had already participated to some extent in the formulation of the mining law. Meanwhile, President

157 El Comercio, Protesta Indígena por la Ley Minera, November 18, 2008.

Correa reiterated that mining development would bring in approximately \$110 billion dollars, of which more than half would be invested into rural communities and local governments. He began to use his radio show as a platform where he would insult anti-mining activists and exaggerate the promises of mining development. His goal sought to gather support for the passing of the new mining law. For instance, on October 18th, 2008, just after the Peoples' Assembly meeting in Cuenca, Correa said the following on his Saturday weekly program:

“They say, ‘all mining is bad?’ what justifies this, god only knows. ‘Oh’ they say ‘it goes against indigenous cosmovision,’ well then go tell Evo Morales to close all of the mines. He is indigenous in a country with more indigenous people than Ecuador...these [arguments] are just fixations of the left, of certain infantile ecologists. Imagine how absurd this is: Sevilla de Oro [a county in southern Ecuador] could be sitting on the world’s largest gold deposit and could be living right on top of such a tremendous wealth, but because of the whims of a few people, not be able to take out that wealth. ‘It will contaminate water resources,’ they say. All of these are lies. Misterns, here we are going to develop a socially and environmentally responsible mining because it is irresponsible to live on top of such a tremendous wealth that can take out of under-development and not use it.”

Correa’s image of Sevilla de Oro potentially sitting on the largest gold deposit, turning it from poor, rural county into a place of wealth was pure fantasy. There were no large mineral deposits confirmed in the area, rather, Ecuador’s largest gold deposit are

found in Southern Ecuador, concessioned out to a Canadian company. Even so, what Correa was marketing was not fact but a fantasy that elides all of the dangers and experiences that other countries have with mining development. The image of ‘living on top of wealth’ erases all of the violence, both physical and systemic, that is central to mining development.

In Neighboring Peru, mining development requires the jailing of activists; the clearing of farmland with farmers; and the pumping of treated water into farming communities. Mining is linked with cancer, the drying up of agricultural lands, rural-urban migration, and contamination of water supply and more. With the image of gold being just underneath ones feet, Correa created a fantasy that modernity and all the progress that came with it were in reach—one just had to get up and grab it.

Correa’s fantastical narrative was a repetition of catch phrases he introduced to link gold development with ideas of progress and development. Beginning earlier in the year, he would make declarations to the media, stating “We cannot be beggars sitting on a sack of gold.” This catch phrase naturalizes the imperative of resource extraction by comparing the national body to a person, bleary-eyed, barefoot, clad in rags and slumped over a potato sack full of gold coins.

Correa’s October 18th declarations that the country sitting on top of riches was so compelling that it was turned into a thirty-second sound bite repeated for months on Cuenca’s most popular radio station. The radio station played this sound bite along with another one of Correa’s well-used catch phrases, “without mining we go back to the caves” throughout the duration of the mining law debates and protests.

In November, I listened to Ondas Azuayas for more than five hours continuously, tracking the number of times I listened to the radio clip. The station played the clip: “Here we are going to develop a socially responsible mining, because it is irresponsible to sit on such great wealth that can get us out of sub-development and not use it,” once every hour for over five hours. Luis Morocho, who collaborated with the radio station as a part-time reporter, believed that multinational companies—not the state—had paid for the ad. In other words, Correa became one of the main spokesmen for the mining industry, relieving mining companies with the burden or necessity of undertaking their own public relations campaigns. In this next part of the chapter, I show how a diverse group of people began to appropriate catch phrases, and the fantasy of development they propagated, in casual conversations and public debates.

Catch phrase 1-The pot of gold

I was surprised to find that people began to repeat the catch phrases. More than once, I found myself in a conversation where the other person would use Correa’s statements as their primary argument for supporting mining development. For example, less than a month after Correa’s visit, a friend and I went to Cuenca’s central plaza. My friend recognized an acquaintance who worked at the church archives. They exchanged hellos, and he asked her if they had archives related to Victoria del Portete. Why she asked? And when I explained my dissertation research, she cut me off, “I am sorry, but I don’t agree with this no to mining position. I agree that mining should be controlled but not with this other radical position.” She became visibly irritated, her face scrunched up and her mouth tightened. She continued, “We cannot sit on a pot of riches and not do

anything. Campesinos are no saints. I worked with them for years [...] They are no environmentalists; they kill a bird just because it is in the way.” She continues without letting my friend get in a word edgewise. “It’s impossible to live from just agriculture; there’s always been draughts and natural disasters.” The image of ‘sitting on a pot of riches’ echoed Correa’s popular catch-phrase.

Catch phrase 2- The Cave

On another occasion, I was surprised at the almost verbatim repetition of another Correa catch phrase. At a late October 2008 dinner party, our lively conversation quickly turned tense when the topic of mining was brought up. Eric, a friend’s partner, from working-class family in the city, and a co-owner of a tour-guide business in Cuenca, said “every form of development leaves a mark; the environment will always be altered even if a little.” He continued, “how else is Correa going to finance free education? We chimed with different response. I said, well, from an economic point of view it’s not clear that mining will actually provide the state with as much revenue as the government says given that the law stipulates only 3-8% revenue from sales will be reinvested back into the country. To this, Eric replies, “but he is an economist, he knows what he is doing, he’ll debate it with anyone.”

Bridget, his partner interjects, “but that is it. He invites debate but then shuts it down.” Marcel, adds, “yes, just like today on the radio today. He says that Lina Solano, Monica Chuji and Martha Roldos are crazy and will argue with themselves in the mirror, no they will argue with him, but he doesn’t give them a chance,” Eric starts to get irritated and voice gets louder, “but he is changing the country, he is fighting the

pelucones, you guys are against him.” We protest in different ways, the three of us agree with the social reforms that he is doing but not with the point of mining. “but what else are we going to live off of? This country has historically lived off of exploitation of resources, we cannot go back to the caves,” pleaded Eric. The catch phrase argues that a no-to mining position would take Ecuador ‘back to the caves’ or cave-man age, naturalized the logic of resource extraction by framing question of progress and development on a linear, evolutionary logical scale with mining development a key point of passage in the transition from poor to rich. In this case, the use of the catch phrase by Eric framed desires for social welfare programs.

Promises of development

The catch phrases that Correa repeated effectively framed desires for wealth, progress and that elusive thing called “development.” Linking mining with wealth also became a trope for multinational national companies. In a televised debate over mining development, Leonardo Elizurre, a multinational company representative from ECSA said the following: “we need to work together against poverty and this [mining] is giving us an opportunity. Mining is a blessing. [...] We are honest people; we have come here to create jobs. [...] with a small area, the size of two farms that would have about five cows and five people, with just this little, we can feed the entire province. We can finance education, health care...In Peru, 98% of the health and education budget comes from mining revenues. In Chile, poverty has been reduced from 16% to 3% in mining zones and illiteracy rate is 3%, this is what we call human development.”

In these three examples that I have given, I show how the catch phrases and the promises of wealth that they inspire have traction. The catch phrases do not in themselves mean much, but when they are repeated and performed in other contexts they become powerful. They are expansive enough to link up with other elements: in Marlene's case, the catch phrase naturalized an urban racism toward campesinos that she used to work with. In Eric's case, the catch phrase linked up with desires for a social welfare state and a more prosperous world, and in the corporate case, images related to the catch phrase helped shape corporate image of honesty and contribution helping rectify the image of exploitation and expropriation.

The catch phrases helped connect dispersed set of people, from Correa, to media, to the librarian, to the tour-guide, and the corporation in way that began to assemble a new kind of Ecuadorian citizen. The catch phrases and their fantasy helped assemble a public around a new form of common sense that mining would be beneficial to the country. But the work of catch phrases does not stop here; it also, unfortunately, helped shape conditions that naturalized state violence towards anti-mining activists. I return to the story of mining law protests to demonstrate some examples.

VIOLENCE JUSTIFIED?

On January 5th, 2009, alliances between the *Coordinadora*, the water boards, and folks from the Peoples' Assembly coalition staged a national road blockade that effectively shut down transportation in the southern part of the country. The alliance came nearly two weeks after an initial uprising held on December 22nd, but was called off shortly before the Christmas holiday. The interim legislative commission was about to

undertake the second, and final debate over the mining. The latest draft of the mining law introduced some minor, yet important, changes to the bill. Irene Cabezas, head of the legislative commission, told the press that the law was now drafted as an ordinary law, not an organic law—a response to the protest demands—along with more stringent state controls over water use and permits in mining operations.¹⁵⁸ She concluded, “I don’t see reason to protest, I invite those who opposed the project to review the changes incorporated into the original text.”¹⁵⁹

The coalition of anti-mining activists still believed the law to favor mining companies. Julia for instance, observed that the law prioritizes mining activity by declaring it ‘public utility’ in all phases of mining development, “guaranteeing access to infrastructure, water, and energy for companies which could come in conflict with needs of local communities and lead to the expropriation of their lands.”¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the draft bill maintained clauses related to the criminalization of protest activities that interrupted mining operations. Correa threatened assembly members to not cede to the pressures of protestors.

The road blockades were met with heavy repression by special police forces, and in some parts, escalated into violence. More than 12 people were detained just on the first day of the protest, some were charged with terrorism, four police along with many

¹⁵⁸ El Tiempo, Antimineros cierran tres vías, January 6, 2009.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Jennifer Moore, “Ecuador: Mining Protests Marginalized but Growing,” January 21, 2009. <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/ecuador-archives-49/1673-ecuador-mining-protests-marginalized-but-growing>

civilians were hurt, and one ambulance burned in Molleturo.¹⁶¹ Carlos Perez was illegally and forcibly detained when he went to make a phone call in downtown Cuenca. The campesina women who had accompanied him reported being hit and shoved when they tried to get the police off of him. The road blockades in other parts of the country continued, but as the state stepped up its police and military operation, and continued to detain protestors, the coalition changed tactics.

After three grueling days of street protests, the Azuay water boards and the Peoples' Assembly affiliates in the south organized a hunger strike in Cuenca. They called for a dialogue with the government. Carlos Perez and Salvador Quishpe filed a petition in the constitutional court to declare the impending law unconstitutional because it violates the rights of communities to participate and be consulted before the adoption of any law that will affect any of their rights. In this case, their right to clean environment, health, livelihoods were all in jeopardy.

When I arrived back to Ecuador from Christmas holiday in the US, I found nearly a dozen people, men and women, including Salvador Quishpe laying on top of mats covered with woolen blankets along the wall of the San Roque Church in Cuenca. The banners and signs in opposition to mining hung like bed-frames around the makeshift beds. Their allies, including a medical team from the University of Cuenca, checked vitals, musicians sang them songs, neighbors kept them company, a priest blessed them,

¹⁶¹ According to a January 23, 2008 article in *El Mercurio*, a CNDVS community leader from Molleturo was charged with terrorism, kidnapping and vandalism to private property. He was held accountable for the burning of the ambulance, though it was rumored that the police set him up. Lina later told me that he testified that he was an infiltrator for the mining company IMC.

the media flashed cameras, and urban allies made sure they were properly hydrated with water and glucose.

Public opinion, however, was far from sympathetic to their cause. An editorial in the local newspaper titled, “Absurd Savagery” called for the “authorities to use an iron fist against the abuse and prepotency of the [protestors] who should be more concerned with producing more for the economic benefit of the country.”¹⁶²

One of the more restrained ones said, even after the road-blockades ended, *“the indigenous sector maintains a radical and irrational position...such attitudes are unacceptable in more civilized countries. Correa has said, with good reason that it is a crime to live like beggars on a sack of gold, the government should develop mining exploitation and help the mining companies undertake social programs in the communities where they operate. It is time to make mining an attractive investment. We dream of an independent, free, and prosperous country.”*¹⁶³

While the anti-mining movement had successfully overcome internal divisions and factions within the diverse organizations, they had not managed to win-over public opinion. Correa’s phrasing of gold as a point of passage to modernity was a fantasy that gripped the public. The fantasy of wealth roused by imagery of gold underneath ones feet blocked only by beggars, created the political and social conditions necessary to violently repress the anti-mining movement and pass the law with an overwhelming majority of votes in its favor.

¹⁶² Armando Albornoz Vintimilla, El Mercurio, “Salvajismo Absurdo” January 10, 2009.

¹⁶³ Eugenio Lloret, El Tiempo, “La Ley Minera” January 27, 2009.

One the night of the sixth day of the protest, January 12th, Fernando Cordero, then head of the interim assembly, convened assembly members for the final round of legislative debate. A fifty majority vote approves the law.¹⁶⁴ Derlis Palacios, Minister of Mines and Petroleum (formerly known as the Ministry of Energy and Mines) in an interview with the media the following day plays up the financial benefit of mining under the law: “calculating everything, we think that the benefit for the state will be approximately 70-80% and the difference will go to the private companies...the oil boom is at its end. We have to prepare ourselves for a new era.”¹⁶⁵ The law did significantly challenge the World Bank financed mining law of 2000 by reaffirming the state’s role in taxing, regulating, and extracting minerals, but did not adopt any of the precepts written into the Mining Mandate. In short, the law put economic interests over community rights. Assembly member Jaime Ruiz celebrated the passing of the law, as a “way out of the international economic crisis that threatens the local economy.”¹⁶⁶

Finally, on January 20th, CONAIE mobilized its bases and staged a massive nation-wide uprising uniting indigenous, campesinos as well as environmental and human rights activists for a day of protests. Rejection of the mining law played a role in the protest demands, which also included the protection of water, a defense of democracy, and the protection of collective rights of communities. In spite of being able to mobilize thousands of people onto the street, Correa—who officially approved the law on the 26th of January—continued to publically berate anti-mining activists, calling them

164 According to the assembly website, votes cast at 10:23 pm were 50 in favor, six opposed, three blank, and six abstentions.

165 El Mercurio, “Minería a gran escala contamina menos: Ministro Derlis Palacios” January 13, 2009.

166 El Comercio, “La Ley Minera cuenta con votos,” January 13, 2009.

“allies of the right” for opposing the mining law. He represented anti-mining activists as obstacles to development: “It is absurd that some want to force us to remain like beggars sitting atop a bag of gold.”

CONCLUSION

The Correa administration argues that the Saturday radio is central to the creation of a new regime of accountability and transparency. In the Saturday radio program, Correa tells the public his activities during the course of the week, where he travelled, and who he met with all within a narrative framework that positions him as an agent of revolutionary change. Insults, rumors, and fantasies conjured by the President are delivered during the radio program within these narratives of social, political and economic transformation. In this chapter, I have explained how parts of his belligerent and often times racist and sexist attacks on anti-mining activists are spliced into thirty second radio ads aired daily. They are published as comics and taken up by a diverse public, repeated and performed in state-sponsored participation forums, activist meetings, dinner tables, side-walk encounters, and newspaper editorials. Through their repetition, discourses constitute new collective state subjects amenable to mineral extraction, who simultaneously uphold fantasies of modernity and nationalist mestizo racism.

Crucial to shaping and creating these new subjectivities is Correa’s National Secretariat of Communication. The Secretariat oversees messaging from every state institution ensuring that the 30 Ministries and 11 secretariats follow the same political

line in every public interview or declaration.¹⁶⁷ The Secretariat also plays a key role in the success of the Saturday Radio show, *Enlace Ciudadano*. Show producers in collaboration with President Correa select weekly themes and topics, highlighting only the positive actions made by the government.¹⁶⁸ It has managed to get nearly every major newspaper to repeat information emitted through the Saturday shows in their daily articles.

Furthermore, *Enlace Ciudadano*, is just one many other outlets managed by the state. According to an *El Comercio* article, the Secretariat of Communication also has a hand in managing well over a dozen other news and media outlets including 1) official media: *El Ciudadano*, *El Ciudadano TV*, *Agencias Andes*; 2) public media: *Ecuador TV*, *Radio Pública*, and *El Telegrafo*, and 3) media confiscated by the state: *Gama TC*, *TC Television*, *Cable Vision* (which includes three TV channels, 6 radios, and 4 magazines).¹⁶⁹ Correa's administration has played this to their advantage. In less than a year, Correa administration has logged 712 hours of publicity spots, more than any other mega company such as *Porta* and *Movistar*—the two competing multinational cell phone companies,¹⁷⁰ and spent approximately \$40 million in publicity in 2009.¹⁷¹ All this to say, that under Correa's highly centralized communications strategy, the concept of nation—and the role of mining in the nation's future—is marketed, sold, and consumed on a daily basis.

167 *EL Comercio*, "Correa controla todo el aparato informativo de su gobierno," April 25, 2010.

168 *El Comercio*, "El enlace sabatino, un alfil de la estrategia de Correa," April 26, 2010.

169 *EL Comercio*, "Correa controla todo el aparato informativo de su gobierno," April 25, 2010.

170 *EL Hoy*, "El Gobierno de la propaganda," January 6, 2010.

171 http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/america_latina/2010/01/100115_0115_ecuador_cadenas_jaw.shtml

That being said, I am also weary of repeating statistics about Correa's communication strategy given that Correa's opponents have also deployed similar statistics with ends that have nothing to do with the building an alternative country where indigenous, afro-Ecuadorian, and mestizo farmers' resource rights are respected. But, this is precisely the binds that social movements face, of wanting to produce a politics of ethical alignment with resource movements but also of not wanting to mobilize the same terms and phrases used by others with different political programs. Reverting back to terms under neoliberalism, like calling the draft mining law "*regalona*" is perhaps the only way that activists have been able to get out of the bind—it doesn't reinforce nationalist discourses central to Correa's regimes, but places them at odds with elite forces and multinational corporations that may or may not be aligned with Correa's political project.

Correa's effective subject-forming strategy had grave consequences for the anti-mining movement. The creation of new state subjects created the necessary political conditions so that the state could use violence against protestors and pass legislation that favored mineral extraction with public support. In spite of their new-found unity, the anti-mining coalition had effectively lost the battle against the Correa administration.

PART II: WATER

Chapter 5: Generative Properties: Water, law, and pluri-national politics.

INTRODUCTION

Correa's governing strategy not only shaped new state subjects but also affected the future of anti-mining organizing. During the height of the mining law conflicts, Correa challenged the anti-mining movement to run for elections, believing that they wouldn't even get the votes of their family members. They accepted Correa's challenge and won. After the defeat of the coalition in the mining law, the movement ran candidates for local and national elections to confront the mining imperative from the inside of Correa's administration. The elections helped consolidate a unity between the anti-mining movement and the indigenous movement. All candidates ran on a Pachakutik ticket—the indigenous political party. Salvador Quishpe, from the anti-mining organization FRESMIGE, attained the highest post. He was elected as the Provincial Prefect in Zamora-Chinchipe, where two major mineral projects are slated for development. In Victoria del Portete, Benjamin Macias won the seat for President of the Parish Council—replacing the vacant spot left by Esteban Ortiz who was ousted years earlier by the anti-mining movement. Ironically, the election of Benjamin reinforced white-mestizo rule in an otherwise heterogeneous local. As usual, anti-mining politics was anything but straightforward.

An important ingredient in the newfound success of the movement was a shift in the language of protest. The coalition movement did not frame its political platform against mining but *for* water protection. Organizing around the language of water helped

the movement establish connections with the indigenous movement and ultimately participate in the forging of a plurinational political platform. In this chapter, I turn to the transformation and consolidation of the anti-mining movement into a water rights movement. The dramatic revival of the anti-mining movement coincided with Correa's contentious proposal to transform water-related legislation, which sparked a new wave of collective organizing. I show how the material and discursive components of water played a crucial role in consolidating a successful coalition.

Decolonizing Political Analysis

On September 11th 2009, two weeks before President Correa's new water bill was debated by the National Assembly, indigenous and farmer organizations staged a rally in Cuenca's central park. An indigenous woman from Nabón addressed the crowd, "The state wants to be the owner of water, [but] water should be communitarian because it is life. Indigenous and campesinos give life. We women have the use and rights to water because water is the blood of our life, water flows through our veins, without water, there is no life. Without [agricultural] production, there is no life."

Her declarations inspired enthusiasm from the more than 5,000 people that flooded downtown Cuenca. She drew on gendered imagery to conceptualize the right to water as a complex web of interdependent relationships that make life possible. Water, as she says, is the "blood"—the thing that gives life to campesinos and indígenas. Just campesinos and indígenas give life through their crops, so too does water. By substituting water for blood, she made material the inter-dependence between human beings and water: a relationship not quite equal because water is a central force in sustaining life. As

many campesinos and indígenas, she conceptualized water as having agency—as having the ability to make life happen.

The rally was the first in a series of many marches and protest in which UNAGUA—representing rural water boards and users from Azuay—and the regional Andean indigenous organization, ECUARUNARI and national indigenous organization, CONAIE would stage against the government’s proposed water law. Collective political action began in September 2009 and ended in May of 2010. The politically tumultuous time went through many peaks and valleys: marches, dialogues with the government, street protests, the jailing of key leaders, and prayers for peace. In this chapter, I focus on the events between September-December 2009, in which campesinos and indígenas were able to make changes to the draft water law to recognize water as a source of life.

I argue that these advancements were the result of an assemblage of human and non-human agency—fueled by water’s generative properties—that helped materialize a movement in defense of life. To examine water as a generative force is to take seriously the terms that campesinos use to conceptualize water. The *compañera* from Nabón conjured up water as a force imbued with the productive capacity to make life possible. This concept of water exceeds traditional social science understandings of agency and the subject that places humans as the sole producer of effects.¹⁷² In an effort to decolonize political analysis, I use her conception of water as an analytical tool. Water as a productive element—as literally a producer of life—helped create coalitions in order to protect local water resources and imbue them with new meanings as a source of life.

¹⁷² See introduction for a theoretical discussion on non-human agency.

I examine the discursive and material agency of water on three registers. On the first register ‘water as life’ is a narrative frame that brings together campesinos and indigenous people into coalitions together. On a second register, I examine the water’s ontology. With the participation of Catholic priests, water becomes a spiritual entity. On a third register, I examine how a drought (the absence of water) highlights the vitality of water. It becomes apparent that water’s vital force is necessary to materialize agrarian livelihoods as well as the rhythms of urban living. In all three registers, water enables connections and helps assemble a collectivity into a movement in ‘defense of life.’

My understanding of the productive capacity of water doesn’t imply a displacement of human agency. I examine the role that indigenous and campesinos play in constituting and harnessing the productive capacity of water. Timothy Mitchell argues, for instance, that in war-time Egypt Ahmad Abbud’s success in embodying capitalism is not based on his ability to “out calculate” his rivals, but is derived from his capacity to “develop and direct a whole series of interconnected circuits: water, electricity, nitrates, military requisitions, cane, processed sugar, cotton, and several others,” into profits (Mitchell 2002). Turning Mitchell’s argument on its head, I examine how indigenous and campesinos’ political agency also depended on their ability to harness water’s generative properties into a collective political project for the defense of life.

A NARRATIVE FRAME: WATER AS A RIGHT TO LIFE.

On August 26th, 2009, President Rafael Correa sent the National Assembly a draft of a new water bill. In the preface to the law, Correa describes the “status quo” of water in the country as one of “unequal access and distribution, distortion in the management of

irrigation water, lack of participation of water users,” among others. The law, he writes, needs to “crystallize the new constitutional concepts” such as Sumak Kawsay. Correa identified the human right to water (article 1) as one of the most important achievement in the water law because it embodies, “the right to life, food, and a healthy and balanced environment.” The law declared water a fundamental human right, a national patrimony for public use, and as exclusively belonging to the state.¹⁷³ The centralization of water appeared to challenge key tenets of the neoliberal doctrine.

Among the law’s most prominent champions, Jorge Jurado—Director of the National Secretariat for Water and former Minister of Energy and Mines—told the public that the law strictly prohibits the privatization of water.¹⁷⁴ Yet, UNAGUA and CONAIE coincided in their perspective that the law would maintain water in the hands of multinational and national industries. Even though the Correa law prohibited the privatization of water, they pointed out that the government simply replaced the neoliberal language of ‘concessions’ for ‘authorizations’ without fundamentally altering legal frameworks for a more equitable distribution of water.¹⁷⁵ Instead, they argued for a draft water law that would legislate water as not just an economic resource but a source of life. At the core of these debates are models of development, based either on extractive industries or ones that would respect nature and indigenous and campesinos’ relationship

173 Article 1: “El derecho humano al agua es fundamental e irrenunciable. El agua es patrimonio nacional estratégico de uso público, inalienable, imprescriptible e inembargable. Los recursos hídricos son parte del patrimonio natural del Estado y serán de competencia exclusiva del Estado central.” Ley Orgánica de Recursos Hídricos, Uso, y Aprovechamiento del Aguay,” Draft, August 26th 2009.

174 Jorge Jurado repeatedly and emphatically told the media that the water law would not privatize water. See for instance El Telégrafo, September 23rd, 2009, “Sector Indígenas Promueve Marcha.”

175 See points 1 and 3, in CONAIE’s “Ten Deadly Sins in the Government’s Water Law Proposal.” Circulated by email September 28th, 2009.

to it. As I discuss later in the chapter, the state became increasingly defensive over accusations that the law would open up water to the privatization.

As a first step towards mobilization, and evidence of the limits to the draft law, UNAGUA and CONAIE each wrote and circulated a legal analysis of the law. UNAGUA's 'five point' analysis was written in a glossy blue pamphlet with picture of campesinos at a rally in Cuenca. It was circulated at water board meetings and an UNAGUA educational workshop on the law in the course of September 2009. For UNAGUA, the law opened up large-scale mining development and reduced the autonomy of community water boards. For instance, article 73 allowed for "authorizations for the economic use of water for mining activities," and article 74, prohibited mining in headwaters (*fuentes de agua*), *except* in the case when those mining projects are declared "of national interest."¹⁷⁶ IAMGOLD's project was repeatedly identified in the press as one of the four largest and most important mining projects earmarked for development. Carlos Perez, UNAGUA president, feared that the state would use the exceptions in article 74 as an argument to turn Quimsacocha into a gold mine. The UNAGUA pamphlet concluded that articles 73 and 74, affirmed Correa's double discourse: "pharisaically using the name of socialism" to deepen the "neoliberal economic, extractivist" development model.¹⁷⁷

The independence of community water board was UNAGUA's other main sticking point. The proposed law would undermine the autonomy of communal water

¹⁷⁶ Ley Orgánica de Recursos Hídricos, Uso, y Aprovechamiento del Aguay," Draft, August 26th 2009.

¹⁷⁷ "La lucha por el agua" UNAGUA and Federation of Campesino Organizations of Azuay, FOA, pamphlet circulated at an UNAGUA water law workshop on September 23, 09.

drinking and irrigation water boards by placing them under the authority of SENAGUA. As collective enterprises, the water boards enjoyed relative autonomy from the State. Though the water boards needed to be recognized by the state and have permits to use water sources, their internal organization and decision-making process was independent from the state. Under the new water law, regulations would be introduced to oversee internal operations of the water-boards, such as rotating directorships and written rules and norms that would be transparent to third parties. The law also prohibited the formation of new water boards. Since water boards were across the Andes, and as we have seen in Victoria del Portete, a political authority, UNAGUA believed that the Correa administration hoped to undermine political resistance by controlling and curtailing the power of these community-based collectives. Moreover, for the first time, the state would determine water tariffs for community users and exercise a “coercive jurisdiction” for the “payment of tariffs and taxes.” To this last point, Carlos Perez, author of the UNAGUA pamphlet, wrote: “this is a commodification of [water] services, which do not respect human rights to water.”¹⁷⁸

UNAGUA was critical of the proposed water law, but had since mid 2008, been calling for a new water law. Perez argued that the water law was 35 years old and in need of “profound changes” now that water was increasingly becoming “apetecido” or desirable.¹⁷⁹ So while UNAGUA disagreed with the way in which the law was

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Letter from FOA (in representation of UNAGUA) to President Correa, June 16th, 2008.

conceptualizing, organizing, and regulating water use, they agreed with the state that a new water law was critically important.

For UNAGUA, as well as CONAIE, water was conceptualized as a force that allows for the reproduction of human and natural life. In the pamphlet's concluding remarks, UNAGUA defined páramos as “spaces of life”—a new way of conceptualizing territory that highlighted campesino and indigenous interdependence on nature for their cultural, material, and cosmological reproduction. UNAGUA put forward five proposals to reform the legal draft: 1) that the páramos be declared free of mining without exception, 2) extinguish all mining concessions in páramos and water sources, 3) water tariffs be determined by the community, 4) Respect for the autonomy of the community water systems, 5) prohibit the sale of water.¹⁸⁰ Overall, UNAGUA perceived the centralization of water resources under the state as a threat to campesino aspirations for agrarian projects, political autonomy, and life itself.

CONAIE's document, “Ten Deadly Sins in the Government's Water Law,” echoed UNAGUA's concerns. For example, CONAIE identified article 73 and 74 related to water and mining extraction, as two among several other articles (70, 67, and 12) that constituted the first ‘deadly sin’: the privatization of water. Although the law did not use the language of privatization, CONAIE's document argued that these articles would allow for the economic use and monopolization of water by private and multinational

180 “La lucha por el agua” UNAGUA and Federation of Campesino Organizations of Azuay, FOA, pamphlet circulated at an UNAGUA water law workshop on September 23, 09.

investors.¹⁸¹ The legal document went further and argued that the law actually protected the rights of those who monopolize water. The proposed law would transfer all water concessions into water authorizations, circumventing a process of audit and control over water resources mandated by the Montecristi Constitution.¹⁸² For CONAIE this meant that the new law would essentially leave water in the hands of those who already dominated water systems, especially in the highlands, which would both threaten campesino human rights to water and jeopardize food sovereignty.¹⁸³

As an alternative, CONAIE proposed its own law. CONAIE's law titled "Water for Living Well" was developed in meetings and workshops with its base communities. The CONAIE law called for a state-*pueblo* managed national water policy under the framework of a plurinational political project. The CONAIE law, which contains nearly 180 articles, sought to create two institutions to help democratize national water management and policy: the Plurinational Council for Water and COMUNAGUA (the Community Institute for Integral Management of Irrigation).¹⁸⁴ Each body would have representations from indigenous, campesino, and afro-Ecuadorian organizations as key decision makers in national water and irrigation policy. This was a contrast to Correa's

181 CONAIE, "Ten Deadly Sins in the Government's Water Law Proposal." Circulated by email September 28th, 2009.

182 See point 3, CONAIE, "Ten Deadly Sins in the Government's Water Law Proposal." Circulated by email September 28th, 2009.

183 See point 5, CONAIE, "Ten Deadly Sins in the Government's Water Law Proposal." Circulated by email September 28th, 2009.

184 Ley de Aguas para el Buen Vivir, CONAIE.

policy in which indigenous people had the collective right to ‘participate’ in water management, only when bodies of water were found on indigenous lands.¹⁸⁵

The CONAIE law privileged communal over individual use of water; placed páramos, primary forests, and mangroves outside of market relations; guaranteed customary management of water; made it a crime to contaminate water; and would expand community-run water boards.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, the CONAIE law defined the human right to water as 40-60 liters of water per day, free of charge. For CONAIE, only by taking plurinationality as the framework for water management would the state be able to implement Sumak Kawsay, or Living Well, as written into the new Constitution of 2008.

Overall, the centralization of water resources did not automatically benefit campesino or indigenous people. The law paved the way for the commodification of water supplies through “authorization” or permitting processes, which sidelined indigenous and campesinos as decision-makers in local and national water policies and jeopardized their rights to drinking and irrigation water. By placing an end to the autonomy and expansion of rural water boards, the proposed law would treat campesinos and indigenous organizations as “third party” entities, similar to private corporations, who were both in the need of regulation. UNAGUA and CONAIE both argued for the indigenous and campesino rights to water; this right was not solely a right to access and manage water but embodied the rights to forms of development that respect nature and support indigenous and campesino livelihoods.

185 Ley Orgánica de Recursos Hídricos, Uso, y Aprovechamiento del Aguay,” Draft, August 26th 2009.

186 Ley de Aguas para el Buen Vivir, CONAIE.

Plurinationalism and the practices of *protesta*

Concerns over water access and management helped fuel the collaborations between UNAGUA, ECUARUNARI and CONAIE. A growing Andean—if not indigenous—consciousness that began to emerge among UNAGUA leadership. Collaborations between UNAGUA and the indigenous movement changed the language and practices of *protesta* in Azuay. In a press conference the day before the September 11th rally, Carlos Perez, Benjamin Macias, Daniel Tigre (from ECUARUNARI), Luis Morocho, and Esteban Ramirez, and myself gathered in the musty FOA headquarters, one floor above Carlos Perez’ law office in Cuenca’s old-town. I accompanied the leaders as they gave statements to a rotating group of newspaper and radio journalists. They often emphasized the Andean or indigenous character of the march. The march, for example, was organized in such a way that people would converge into Cuenca’s central park from the “four cardinal points,” symbolizing the chakana or Andean indigenous cross. At one point, Benjamin, who people identified as a white campesino, spoke against article 73 and 74 which opened up mining development, and declared “dairy farming is an ancestral activity,” to which Daniel Tigre added, “Ecuador is ancestrally an agricultural and dairy farming country, this will provide development.”¹⁸⁷ Since my fieldwork began in January of 2008, this was the first time that national leaders from CONAIE, including then president and vice-president Marlon Santi and Humberto Cholango, as well as indigenous and black assembly members would attend a political rally in Cuenca.

¹⁸⁷ Fieldnotes, September 10th, 2009.

Many people in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui were planning on attending the rally, but some like Mari, didn't. "I'm not going to play into the hands of CONAIE," she said in a tone of skepticism. She believed that CONAIE was strategically capitalizing on the power of the anti-mining movement in Azuay to bolster its own political power, as if those two political entities were completely distinct from each other. The rally in Cuenca was one of three stops that CONAIE leaders would be making around the country to garner support for an indigenous uprising. Indigenous movement leaders threatened to stage a nation-wide indigenous uprising if the government did not open up the water law to national debate where campesino and indigenous proposals would be seriously considered. CONAIE sought the participation of Victoria and Tarqui, as well as other campesino communities in their uprising. Although Mari's perceptions may have been one way of reading the political landscape, others, such as Carlos Perez, recognized that CONAIE's legal proposals collectively favored campesinos and indigenous people living in Victoria and Tarqui, and was concurrent with their demands to maintain Kimsacocha free of large-scale mining. In fact, CONAIE and ECUARUNARI's concerns for maintaining water free from large-scale mining was shaped by events that unfolded in Victoria del Portete among other places. While Mari stayed back, her sister Beatriz enthusiastically attended the march. Her mom, Berta, commented, "we have to try all strategies."

On the day of the march, we gathered around the *glorieta* to listen to speakers.¹⁸⁸ A rainbow flag waved from the *glorieta* where a makeshift stage was set up with an amplifier system. The sun beat intensely down, and many of us donned hats. Some women folded up their *chalin*as and put it on their head. Thousands of people had participated in the march; water brought people together in unity in a way that the mining law mobilizations had not. It was the first time, since my fieldwork in early 2008, where Quechua was spoken in the duration of a political rally. After introducing each speaker in Spanish, a *compañero* from ECUARUNARI introduced them in Quechua, and some speakers, like Marlon Santi gave their speeches in Quechua before translating them into Spanish. The crowd punctuated each speaker's turn with the chant "water should not be sold, but defended" (El agua no se vende, se defiende!), which spoke against the commodification of water. This would become the movement's slogan, and collectively bring together the geographically and ethnic/culturally heterogeneous group under a common water movement.

The connections forged through mobilizations against the water law began to also change the ways that leaders from the anti-mining movement spoke. For instance, the strong indigenous presence helped animate Carlos Perez' comparison of the campesinos in Azuay to the puma. "Mr. Correa" he began, "at least the Cañari, as well as the Amazonians, of all the country [sic], can start to emulate what was once the great Cañari Puma. The Cañari puma was very calm when he slept. People would bother him; they sat

188 Descriptions of the march are from my field notes on September 12th, 2009. All quotes and references to speeches at the political rally are from my own recordings taken on the day of the march, September 11th, 2009.

on him, they tickled him, they pinched him...that is what the government is doing to us. But oh when the puma---the people---awake, there is no force that can stop him,” and shouting at the top of his lungs, “and that is the Pueblo Azuay Cañari!” Just then, a contingent of two thousand or so Cañari’s from the Province of Cañar marched in; the sound of the *quiya* reverberated throughout the plaza. The crowd went wild. There were now about six thousand indigenous people and campesinos flooding the center of Cuenca. This was no ordinary feat; the city of Cuenca, a symbol of well-to-do whiteness was now a repository for subaltern difference and power.

Water was having a generative effect. Its power as a producer of life generated new coalitions and alliances that began to change and shift the language and practices of protest in Azuay. Water, as the woman from Nabón said at the rally, “is life, is the blood of our life.” Water could not just be reduced to Indigenous symbolism but was material force in the capacity of campesinos and indigenous to maintain life and materialize the forms of development they wanted. Implicit in framing water as the right to life, were campesino and indigenous life projects that brought together the intersection of place, identity, and development.



Pampamesa’s—an Andean ‘tradition’ of communal eating—were organized during the water law protests. Photo by Kléver Calle.

Expanding Allies: IAMGOLD’s water petition

CONAIE and its regional bodies organized an indigenous and campesino uprising at the end of September, just two weeks after the rally. Although Carlos Perez, UNAGUA’s president, was developing close alliances with ECUARUNARI leaders, UNAGUA’s bases which included water boards in Sigsig and Chordeleg, communities north east of Cuenca, opted for a march instead. The march was to be held on September 28th, and would coincide with the first day of the indigenous uprising. In this section, I

show IAMGOLD's efforts to secure water permits in campesino watershed enabled the creation of new alliances in the local anti-mining movement, and which ultimately, fed into the larger alliances with CONAIE and ECUARUNARI.

On Sunday, the day before the march, I travelled to Victoria del Portete for the civic fiestas that included a feast, a fundraiser, and a rodeo¹⁸⁹. Now that Benjamin Macias was the president of the parish, anti-mining sentiments went public. An UNAGUA banner was hung inside a rodeo rink: "water is worth more than gold" and Javier passed out UNAGUA's glossy blue pamphlets with the legal analysis. Don Socorro, a stout, round man with curly black hair, and an expressive face was one of the first people I bumped into after getting off the bus. He and Narcisa, a college student and distant relative to Benjamin, were standing on the side of the road. I asked them how the plans were coming together for the march, "yes, people are ready—we are ready." Said Don Socorro, "because the government is starting a smear campaign," and told us how Correa the day before called indigenous leaders liars among other things. The government consistently said that the law was a good law that would prohibit the privatization of water, protect water sources, and leave ample room for citizen participation, and called indigenous and campesinos "uninformed," which sparked outrage from people. It was likely that Correa's threats had the consequence of stoking opposition.

Don Socorro continued, "the meeting went well yesterday, here in San Pedro and then in Girón, there were lots of people in Girón [that will come out for the march].

189 The descriptions and conversations from the day of the fiestas are recorded in my fieldnotes, September 27th, 2009.

Don't you see that the company [IAMGOLD] is now *demandando* the water? All the people from San Fernando, San Gerardo, they are with us—*toditos*” he emphasized. After they ratified the decision to march on Monday in Girón, there was even a post-meeting march through the streets of Girón. Don Socorro was ecstatic.

The movement was in an upswing. IAMGOLD had made significant inroads into the parishes of San Fernando and San Gerardo by financing community development projects as early as 2002. Now IAMGOLD's hegemony was starting to crumble. As Don Socorro affirmed, IAMGOLD filed a legal petition for water permits in San Gerardo, provoking new found alliances and support for the local movement against IAMGOLD. Earlier in 2009, IAMGOLD filed a petition for the use of eight liters of water per second from the Rio Cristal, which flows from the southern end of Kimsakocha towards San Gerardo, a parish within the jurisdiction of the county of Girón.¹⁹⁰ In its petition, IAMGOLD established that the water was to be “destined for industrial mining activities,” for a ten year period. The company justified its petition by arguing that there were “no known water users.” This argument held only if IAMGOLD defined water users as those with permits to the very exact point in the river that IAMGOLD hoped to draw from, and not downstream users. IAMGOLD mentioned that downstream users would not be adversely affected because the company would use a “closed circuit system” and any leaked waters would be treated. IAMGOLD declared the risks to contamination as “*nulo*” or “zero.”

190 IAMGOLD petition to SENAGUA, signed by Jorge Barreno Cascante, Jose Antonio Cordero Moscoso, and Wilson Matute Calle. Stamp received, July 14th, 2009.

Community members and individuals responded to IAMGOLD's petition by filing counter-petitions to block IAMGOLD's water permits in the SENAGUA bureaucracy. Two community water boards, both representing approximately 40-45 families, an irrigation board consisting of 25 members, and as well as a hacendado who had his own water concession in the Rio Cristal filed four separate petitions to oppose IAMGOLD's water permit petition.¹⁹¹ All four petitions founded their claims as "water users"—a collective identity that had become salient in anti-mining politics. They argued for an expansive definition of 'water users' that included people downstream, suggesting that upstream activity could have an adverse impact on water quality and quantity.

For example, the petition filed by Carlos Perez, acting lawyer to a San Gerardo water-board, read, "we have been using the stream historically for multiple use: domestic use, drinking source for animals, irrigation, and cultural uses...in times of drought the water levels drop leading to severe difficulties for water users." The water-board indicated that IAMGOLD's petition for 8 liters of water per second was "an astronomical quantity" in times of drought and would leave virtually no water for people downstream. By expanding the definition of water users and drawing attention to changes in water flows through the season, comuneros argued their central point: granting IAMGOLD water permits would adversely affect water uses that are "elemental for sustaining

191 According to SENAGUA documents, the four petitions were filed by Félix Cornelio Tenesaca Zhunin, Félix Victor Arevalo Panjon, Alfonso Maria Sarmiento Pena, and Rafael Emiliano Gavilanez Reira.

life.”¹⁹² The language of life provided the framework for articulating the material and social aspects of water that make life possible in the highland Andes.

It turned out that IAMGOLD had also filed for one liter of water per second in the Rio Irquis, specifically from the Chorro *Tasqui*—a tributary of the Quinhuahaycu stream¹⁹³. In their original petition, IAMGOLD solicited one liter for the duration of six months for its drilling activities, but then filed an amendment for the duration of ten years. This petition, as well as the petitions for the Rio Cristal, was signed by Claudio Hermosillo, acting lawyer to IAMGOLD and native to Victoria del Portete. This completely angered Don Socorro. He told me, “I want to go up to Wilson’s father and tell him, ‘Did u raise your children to do this? To take away your water? Because our water comes from Irquis.’ Don Socorro lived in the southern end of Victoria where most of the local elites and large hacendados held their land as did Hermosillo’s family. They drew from the Pucara-Loma drinking system, which had been presided by Claudio’s father, and maintained distance from the anti-mining movement. Don Socorro, neighbors with Benjamin, participated in the movement largely through the irrigation board that collectively organized against IAMGOLD, and in coloration with the Victoria-Tarqui drinking water system. Elections for the Pucara Loma system directors, held only days before, ousted Matute’s father in favor of a *compañera*. Don Socorro chuckled at the novelty of having a woman elected as a water board leader “but they are with us, with UNAGUA,” Don Socorro said as he tried to straighten his wide grin.

192 Petition to Senagua, September 3, 2009.

193 IAMGOLD petition to SENAGUA, signed by Jorge Barreno Cascante, José Antonio Cordero Moscoso, and Wilson Matute Calle. No date.

IAMGOLD's petition for water permits drew on several articles, including article 42 of the water law to justify the permits. Article 42 allowed for water to be used for energy, mining, or other industrial uses without restrictions.¹⁹⁴ The current water law enabled mining companies to secure water permits by following a simple procedure: name of the river, catchment point, name and address of known water users, use of the water, timeline for water use, and technical plans to ensure compliance with related regulations. The water law allowed for IAMGOLD to define catchment areas with no "known" water users as a way to circumvent additional regulations if community and individual water holders were recognized as having a stake in the same river. Thus, the current water law was also an actor: it helped create the legal arrangements that made water an unequally distributed and highly disputed resource in mining politics, but also enable the coalition of people to emerge against IAMGOLD.

Carlos speculated that IAMGOLD was trying to secure permits to water because the law could, admittedly, make it a "tiny bit" more difficult for IAMGOLD to gain water permits if passed. 'Left' politics under post-neoliberalism was never straight forward. Groups had to be cautious with the framing of their activism and demands. A simple opposition to Correa's law would ensure that the current law would remain in effect and ostensibly a grant a death sentence to rivers, water sources, or páramos such as Kimsacocha.

194 Article 42 of the 2004 Water Law states: "rights will be authorized for the generation of energy for industrial and mining use."

Overall, local participation in the water law debates were motivated and animated by the water law which privileged economic uses of water resources. Ironically, IAMGOLD's petition for water permits expanded local alliances against the company by expanding the number of people who saw themselves as "water users" potentially affected by IAMGOLD's mining activities. This helped strengthen local demands for mining regulation in water-rich areas. Local alliances coalescing around IAMGOLD's mining project helped motivate people to participate in the water law marches and protests lead by UNAGUA, CONAIE, and ECUARUNARI even if they did not identify as indigenous.

ONTOLOGY: WATER AS A SACRED ENTITY

The day following the fiestas in Victoria del Portete, we gathered at the *Parque de la Madre*, about ten blocks from the apartment that I rented. On my way down, I recall seeing police lined in riot gear hanging around different corners of old historic part of Cuenca, surely in anticipation of the mobilizations. The small city park, with large trees, was a popular place for runners. It sits close to the *Río Tomebamba*—one of the four rivers that flows through Cuenca. The *Tomembama* bisects the old and new part of Cuenca, and the park sits on the 'new' side of town. Organizers planned it such that we would start from the park, march along a main thorough fare in the new part of the city, across the river into the old town, and stop at the Governor's place on the central plaza.

When I arrived, people were in small groups chatting, signs hanging low or resting against trees. All the usual suspects were there including Carlos Perez, Don Félix, Lourdes, Felicia, Don Chemo, Don Gilberto, Doña Graciela, and even Beatriz. I didn't

see Benjamin, but later Don Eduardo showed up as a ‘delegate’ from the parish governing council. Don Guillermo eagerly passed around a small leaflet with eight chants, encouraging people to practice them before the march started. Others passed around the daily newspaper, mulling it over to see “que dicen los medios,” (what the media says).

The *El Comercio* of Quito featured a large spread titled, “CONAIE wants to recuperate its strength” on the imminent indigenous uprising.¹⁹⁵ The article examined the water issue as a possible way that the national indigenous movement would recuperate the strength that had characterized the organization in the 1990s, or at least until the Lucío Gutierrez regime aided its fragmentation and debilitation. The article also repeated Correa’s accusations made earlier on Saturday that the indigenous movement was trying to destabilize the country. Indeed, Correa had said that the movement was trying to provoke a coup similar to what had just happened in Honduras, and called CONAIE leaders “golden ponchos”—a term coined by the right wing oligarchy a decade before during the ascent of the national indigenous movement.¹⁹⁶ Marcel affirmed that Correa was just “manipulating” public opinion.

In the same newspaper, I noticed a cartoon that featured a drawing of Saint Peter on a cloud with two water facets. One had a spider on it, and other just a small drop of water. Saint Peter was fiddling with the two faucets with a confused look on his face. A note left on the cloud was addressed to “Mr. Saint Peter,” from the “National Council of

195 *El Comercio*, “La CONAIE quiere recuperar su fuerza” Sept. 29th, 2009.

196 Moore, Jennifer “Ecuadorians protest new water laws,” Oct. 1st, 2009 published in Upsidedownworld.com

Water.” “Saint Peter,” a man walking by with a copy of the water law under one arm and a copy of the communications law in another, “didn’t they tell you? You too have to ask for permission from the State for your floods and droughts.” The cartoon poked fun out of Correa’s increased centralization of control over water and the media; the state placed even the heavens under their domain.¹⁹⁷

As we all gathered to start the march, I noticed the group from San Gerardo. Two men raised a large hand written sign on wooden posts: “San Gerardo Rejects Mining Companies.” I could hardly contain my excitement. This was not the biggest march that UNAGUA held but it was a significant one with the addition of new allies. Even the iconography was changing. The march was led by women from San Pedro de las Escaleras holding a large, brand-new blue UNAGUA banner UNAGUA’s new emblem—a water drop with a chakana inside—was as both symbolic of the growing unity among UNAGUA and CONAIE and changes in cultural identities that were unfolding which valorized an Andean identity.

The march snaked through the old town and new town and stopped at the Governor’s palace in Cuenca’s central plaza. There, Carlos presented the Governor with a list of demands related to the water law, which included prohibition of water in páramos but also the autonomy of water boards. “The Water boards have worked very hard, with picks and shovels, through *mingas* to make sure that our dreams for water become a reality. Now [with this law] we will be regulated by SENAGUA. We ask that communities be respected, that our autonomy be respected.” He then presented the

¹⁹⁷ El Comercio, Sept. 29th, 2009.

Governor with a set of gold jewelry, “Correa has said we cannot continue to be beggars sitting on sack of gold. He wants to extract all of the gold in the country. If he wants gold so badly, here...is some gold jewelry, please give this gold jewelry to the president but leave us, the communities, with the water.” The crowd laughed and cheered at Carlos’ well handled performance. The Governor insisted that public servants cannot accept gifts and people shouted. Finally, he accepted and to the opposition of the compañeros, said that they would put it in a museum. Mobilizations that began with a simple opposition to a multinational mining project, now turned into a broad set of demands for the maintenance of agrarian identities and political autonomy.

Making water sacred

Catholic priests now allied with the movement helped to make water a sacred entity symbolizing life. After the governor’s palace, the march took an unexpected turn, literally. Rather than ending the march in the plaza, as usual, the march continued back to the new side of town, past the Rio Tomebamba to a green belt where two rivers, the Rio Tarqui and the Rio Yanuncay meet. The Rio Tarqui is the same as the Rio Irquis, and both the Rio Tarqui and the Yanuncay come from the Kimsacocha páramo. I had noticed that Father Samuel Delgado, from the western lowland province of Ponce Enriquez, had accompanied the march but didn’t think much of it until we arrived on the sloped edge of the river. I initially met Father Samuel through a side research project on the impacts of small-scale mining on the lowland side of the Azuay province, whose headwaters flowed outward toward the gulf of Guayaquil. He was an advocate for the environmental rights of the rural communities affected by mining development. Father Samuel was balancing

himself on one of the rocks just off of the river bed. He was now wearing a green chasuble with brightly colored stripes, and two women on the right hand side of him wore blue shift dresses with colored stripes and embroidery and crochet work. They held earthen clay pitchers.

Everyone gathered along the riverside, and I came around the bridge to the opposite side of the river to take pictures [see picture]. I then joined the ‘congregation’ of marchers on the riverbed slope. Padre Samuel, speaking through a megaphone, began “this mobilization is a sign of a new kind of awareness that exists in our communities, in our families, and in our hearts. This is awareness for the creation, an awareness of the environment, an awareness of the water because it gives us life.”¹⁹⁸ We made the sign of the cross and Father Samuel began the ever riverside mass.

A young priest that I had never seen in the lucha read a very short scripture from the Gospel of Saint John: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from him."

Father Samuel’s homily drew together the sacred and the political. “In our indigenous and campesino communities,” father Samuel explained, “water is considered sacred, water comes from the divine, and it is alive.” He continued, “that is why in article 74 [of the proposed water law] it should read in all clarity, that all forms of contaminating activity are absolutely prohibited from taking place next to water sources (Fuentes de agua).” He continued, “the statistics are clear in our province [Azuay]... less than 3% of

198 All quotations from the riverside mass were translated and transcribed by myself, from a digital recording by Kléver Calle, September 28, 2009.

water concessionaries hold 70% of water concessions. Water is being monopolized... when it becomes a commodity, when it is an object to be bought and sold, and it's placed in the hands of those who believe that they are owners of power and money in this world." He believed that water should be the right of the communities, and wanted to bless only "right" water. Invoking God, as accompanying the local struggle, "as he accompanied his people from slavery into freedom, from death into living," he invited everyone to repeat after him: "Free water and living water is holy water." Water was sacred and alive only when it served campesinos and indigenous collectivities.

Catholicism helped develop a language and grammar to transform water from a disputed resource into a living and sacred entity. Water, as we saw in Chapter One, entered into public debates through disputes over its chemical properties—whether it contained fecal matter or lead. Water as a set of chemical components that could be isolated and identified was mediated through science. Now, water (and the Irquis River) when mediated through Catholic discourses, entered political debates as a spiritual entity. According to Padre Samuel, water was both pure—meaning clean and morally uncorrupt—and alive, a life-force, a "vital materiality" in the words of Jane Bennett (2010). His homily made evident that water could be drawn into competing moral, political, and economic projects, either helping to multiply the money for the powerful as it had done or serving the collective interests of a 'moral' community. In the final analysis, for Father Samuel, it was only water that served the 'moral' community that could be considered holy water, and the only way to do that was to support legal reforms

to prohibit mining in headwaters. Thus, anti-mining politics was also seen as a way to create a more equitable distribution of water.

The mass made a deep impression on me and among other participants in the movement. This impression was evident during the blessing of the water. After the homily, Father Samuel invited people to come down into the river to get water for the blessing. The two women dipped the clay pitchers of water and held them. Father Samuel asked us to raise our right palm over the river. In an even, fast and meditative tone, Father Samuel prayed, “blessed be the water in our aquifers (fuentes), blessed be the water on our tables, may irrigation water be blessed so that our fields be productive may the water that runs by our fields be blessed so that every time we use them we also receive the blessings of god....” At the end of the blessing, he also blessed the people who defend water “so that they take care of it, defend it and administer it with awareness.”

I was stunned by the silent and powerful collective energy that Father Samuel’s riverside drew out. It was as if something clicked into place; as if we were all captured and suspended in time. People had talked a lot about collectivity, and being ‘*unidos*’ or united in struggle, but what Padre Samuel did was deliver the movement’s political activism into popular language and belief systems that already existed. This was powerful stuff. It was perhaps a version of what Victor Turner called *communitas*- of being in communion. Carlos Perez had organized a blessing of the water before as part of the practices of protest. I recall during a march against the mining law, Carlos Perez encouraged people to bring bottles filled with river water. During that ceremony the river water was blessed by a local shaman, who was both disconnected from the movement

and whose rituals were foreign to people's local sensibilities. Though the media captured the blessing and published it the following day in the newspaper, the compañeras that I had accompanied during the march looked on uninterested. The shaman's blessing was a novelty that was disconnected from ways people imagined and practiced their own spirituality and viewed their identity.

Delivering a blessing through Catholic idioms, however, generated a completely different response among people. The intersection of Catholicism and popular environmental politics in this simple riverside ceremony, bereft of any of the pretenses associated with Catholic elitism in Cuenca, captured and held peoples imagination. I stood next to Marcel, the city activist, who was energized, "this is what masses must've been like in the times of Jesus Christ. Out in the open air, baptized with water from the river...."¹⁹⁹ Father Samuel encouraged everyone to dip their hands in the water and splash it over their heads to "properly receive the blessing." People laughed, commented, and gave water to people behind them that couldn't reach the water, a young boy shouted, "*Carnaval!*" as he splashed in the river water. At the end of the mini-mass, Father Samuel made one last request: "in our activities related to water let's not lose site of the trees that we should plant near our rivers and in our mountains, preferably native trees." As I explain in the following chapter, this last request was later taken up by people, an indication of the role that Catholicism played in the transformation of people's subjectivities and changes in relationship to the environment.

¹⁹⁹ Fieldnotes, September 28th, 2009.

Eco-Liberation Theology

Connections between the anti-mining movement and Father Samuel were enabled by a couple of different factors. First, in an interview, Father Samuel told me that he first knew that mining had harmful effects six years ago, when he first started to serve the rural communities of Ponce Enriquez.²⁰⁰ The parish of ‘Ponce’ falls in the lowland side of the Azuay province. Small- and mid-sized mining operations dot the foothills to the west of Kimsacocha, whose headwaters flows out to the Gulf of Guayaquil and then onto the Pacific Ocean. Since the 1990s, small-scale and mid-sized mining operations, largely owned by national elites, have contaminated four major river watersheds in the area. This contamination is well documented by World Bank consultants in the late-1990s, serving as a justification for the need of a large-scale ‘sustainable’ mining sector, and more recently, by the municipality of Guayaquil, whose organic banana farmers are adversely affected by continued environmental violations. The Ministry of Energy and Mines has shut down mining operations in the area several times, but shortly after they do so, they re-authorize mining activity in the area.

Father Samuel has accompanied organic banana farmers and other rural activists in their demands for clean-up of rivers and to stop mining in their headwaters. Not only has contamination affected the production of their crops, but has also adversely affected the health of downstream community. Cancer, severe learning disabilities, spontaneous abortions, among other health-related factors are also reported in the area. Just as he used the words, “living” to describe holy water in the religious ceremony, he used the inverse

200 Interview with Father Samuel. Conducted by Jennifer Moore and author in May 2010.

to describe the state of rivers in Ponce. In Ponce, “we have two dead rivers. There are no signs of life in the Chico or Siete rivers. With the invasion of mining in Pijilí,” the community he was currently serving in Ponce, “the Balao river is heading in the same direction.” Father Samuel was convinced that a large-scale industrial mining sector would lead to greater environmental contamination—not less—as proponents often argued.

Second, Father Samuel’s official work with the Social Pastoral began to incorporate environmental concerns. Father Samuel was the Coordinator of the Social Pastoral of Cuenca, which used the Social Doctrine of the Catholic church to serve Cuenca’s poorest and most disenfranchised community. The Social Doctrine is a set of moral teachings concerning politics, economics, and social orders. It formed the basis for the emergence of Liberation Theology in Latin America. In Cuenca, the social doctrine was used a set of guiding principles of the Social Pastoral’s work to ‘transform social reality’ by focusing on equality, human rights, and social and political development in Cuenca. During lent of 2009, several months before the riverside mass, Father Samuel and other priests affiliated with the Social Pastoral spearheaded a new campaign within the church to bless water only when it’s pure.

The campaign launched on Holy Saturday, when water is blessed and vested with its sin-cleansing powers. As part of the campaign, Padre Samuel and affiliated priests refused to bless water that was “Amenazada, Guerreada, Ultrajada, and Acaparada,” that is, threatened, disputed, abused or monopolized.²⁰¹ To bless such water was to absolve and purify it, a politics of complicity with social structures that impinged on lives of the

201 Fieldnotes September 28th, 2009.

poor. The campaign to only purify “living, and free” water was also a popular education tool to raise awareness of the intersection of environmental and social justice issues. For Father Samuel, environmental problems were rooted in capitalism. He believed that neoliberal capitalism violated several Social Doctrine principles, including its principle of sufficiency. He explained to me in an interview,

*“every human being should be content to live with only the bare necessities needed to live with dignity. But it turns out that laws facilitate this system of death that we find ourselves in. This neoliberal or capitalist system, allows one person to monopolize everything so that they can get with money, with thier political power, without leaving the necessary resources for other human beings to live a dignified life. This is why we see so much social exclusion.”*²⁰²

He often referred to the doctrine he practiced as eco-theology, a movement to reflect on environmental problems from the Social Doctrine of the church, and work towards change. This approach to Catholicism energized collectivities against mining and for water reforms. As of the writing of this dissertation, Father Samuel and other catholic priests continue to accompany the movement, blessing water and nature at marches and rallies against water.

At the end of the riverside mass, he and Father Walter Nuño—another new addition who served a rural community outside of Cuenca—passed out posters for the AGUA [WATER] campaign. The campaign poster had a colorful drawing of the ‘Pachamama’ or Mother Earth that was familiar to me. The image has circulated through

²⁰² Interview with Father Samuel. Conducted by Jennifer Moore and author in May 2010.

the environmental and indigenous rights activist community. In this picture, a long-haired woman is sitting cross-legged with her arms wrapped around drawings of rivers, mountains, birds, and other forms of nature. Her hair and body have smaller drawings of corn, and snakes. Below it, AGUA [Water] was spelled out:

Amenazada [threatened]

Guerreada [disputed]

Ultrajada [abused]

Acaparada. [monopolized]

A crowd overwhelmed the two priests as they handed out the posters.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS POLITICS

Simultaneous to the march in Cuenca, CONAIE's bases blocked roads along the highland and lowland parts of the country. Tense relationships between CONAIE and the government led to dialogues, mobilizations, and the death of an indigenous school teacher. In this section, I draw my attention to the intersections of national and local indigenous politics.

Marlon Santi, CONAIE president, called off the road blockades at 4pm. The government appeared ready to engage Indian leaders in a serious discussion over water law reforms. The night of the march, I went over to the Andrade's house in Cuenca; a family I had grown close with during my fieldwork to watch TV. We turned on ECTV's news, the state-run channel. They qualified the indigenous mobilization a "failure." The

news report said that the *paro* “didn’t have support,” and showed cars and trucks circulating through major highways along ECUARUNARI strongholds such as Cayambe. When they did show scenes from the protest, the camera panned over fallen trees or large boulders without people.

The channel also made every effort to represent campesinos and indigenous protesters as “misinformed.” One of the few roadside interviews went something like this:

Newscaster: Do you know about the water law?

Elderly man: no

Newscaster: why are you out here today if you don’t know anything about the water law?

Elderly man: I got word that privatization [of water] is coming.

The news report had taken the elderly man—who had not heard of the water law—as representative of the entire indigenous and campesino mobilization, implying that they too were either naïve, mildly stupid, or simply misinformed child-like people. The representation was underpinned by racist assumptions of indigenous people as not having the same capacity for rational thoughts and behaviors as their white-mestizo counterparts. The news report then showed a power point slide with article three of the draft law, prohibiting the privatization of water as a “fact” and a way to put to rest any confusion.

This was not the first time that news coverage in Ecuador has undermined indigenous demands and mobilizations through racist representations. In the 1990s,

progressive and conservative factions relied on racist understandings of indigenous people in national debates over agrarian reform (Sawyer 2004). What was unsettling was that these racial understandings were deployed by a supposedly “revolutionary government” whose leader, Rafael Correa, often appeared next Evo Morales and Hugo Chavez nearly every week in the newspaper. The interpretation of the news coverage was more than just racist representation; it was part of the government’s efforts to *actively* undermine the power and legitimacy of indigenous organizations. Jorge Jurado, the Director of SENAGUA, appeared on the same news report, declaring that CONAIE “lies to its bases,” while President Correa declared that “four leaders” from CONAIE are simply looking “for a re-election in November.” It appeared that the Correa administration did not exactly call CONAIE to the table as a way to seriously dialogue, but as a way to clear any visible opposition to the government’s so called revolutionary project.

I waited for Don Lauro and Doña Hilda to react, but they stared at the television silently, unflinching at the coverage. I was outraged by the racist coverage and also the way that the Correa administration was so effectively using media and representations. ECTV spent 40 minutes trying to prove that CONAIE’s uprising was a failure and cast its leaders as power-hungry caudillos. CONAIE had effectively set the terms of public debate and the state was on the defensive. Even so, the coverage was partially effective. The coverage shaped my own thinking. I wondered: Did CONAIE cede to the government calls for a dialogue so quickly because the road blockades were weak?

In contrast, ECUAVISA, Ecuador's most popular news station, gave a sympathetic coverage of the indigenous uprising²⁰³. They gave airtime to indigenous leaders and Pachakutik assembly members, and echoed their words in a power point slides that showed the contradictions of the water law. I suspected that conservative interests in the country—such as ECUAVISA owners— also welcomed the opportunity to play up frictions in Correa's platform for 'revolutionary' change. Furthermore, Correa's communication law, also an effort to strengthen state regulation over television, newspaper, and radio, generated a lot of opposition from media outlets. Again, so-called "progressive" politics under post-neoliberalism was far from straightforward.

The death of Bosco Wizum

Two days later the protests took a turn for the worse. As I described above, Marlon Santi and government officials called off the uprising on Monday afternoon to negotiate with the government. CONFENIAE, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, was not notified or consulted in decisions to go to dialogue. This was a misstep on the part of Santi who was obligated to consult with its regional organizations first.²⁰⁴ CONFENIAE—the Amazonian regional indigenous organization—continued their protests. CONFENIAE protest demands went beyond the water law—and included longstanding concerns over territorial autonomy (referred to as *conscripciones territoriales indígenas* —CTI), and reinvestment of oil revenues into the

203 ECUAVISA was voted has having the most credible news coverage in an opinion poll. Vistazo, "Las voces en que Creemos" May 13th, 2010.

204 El Universo, "Un muerto tras enfrentamiento en Morona Santiago", online report posted 5:40pm, September 30th, 2009.

region. CONFENIAE continued its protests in the following days, shutting down key transportation arteries in the province of Morona Santiago and Santi's home province of Pastaza. On Wednesday, September 30th, a clash between police and Shuar protestors on the Upano river bridge resulted in the death of Bosco Wizum, a Shuar bilingual education teacher.

Each side blamed the other for the death of Wizum. Correa blamed protestors for the death of their *compañero*. In a news conference, Correa said that "tremendously violent groups with shot guns and rifles waited for police and met them with gun shots."²⁰⁵ Specifically, Correa said that the Arutam Shuar were armed and implied that one of them had accidentally shot their *compañero*. As evidence he pointed out that the Arutam radio station encouraged people to "go out with poisoned spears and broken glass bottles for war."²⁰⁶ His depictions played up racial stereotypes of the Shuar as a warring, violent indigenous group.

FICSH, the Inter-provincial, Shuar organization, on the other hand, maintained that the police were responsible for Wizum's death.²⁰⁷ They circulated a series of pictures of police bullets and related hardware, as well as public statements that denounced police brutality. A journalist, who was present at the scene, confirmed that Wizum was facing police when he was shot from the front.²⁰⁸ He heard reports that some Shuar were armed, he didn't see any of them with guns. FICSH demanded an official government apology

205 Jeanneth Valdivieso for Associated Press, "Ecuador, Indians trade blame for bloody clashes" October 1, 2009.

206 El Universo, "Amazónicos aceptan Dialogo y levantan paro," October 2nd 2009.

207 FICSH, "Nación Shuar y Achuar Herida y Amenazada," October 1st, 2009.

208 Jennifer Moore, "Ecuador: CONAIE and Correa begin dialogue," October 7th, 2009. Published in upsidedownworld.org

for the death of Wizum, and the installation of a dialogue with the central government, a special commission from the National Assembly, the Interamerican Human Rights Court, ALDHU, the Commission of Human Rights from the United Nations, to dialogue in Sucúa, Macas.²⁰⁹ Correa, in turn, insisted that he would only dialogue with the CONAIE leaders if CONFENIAE called off the road blockades.²¹⁰ In solidarity with the Amazonian Indians, CONAIE immediately rescinded its offer to dialogue with the government and protest measures continued, if not radicalized.²¹¹

People in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui waited to hear from UNAGUA leaders and CONAIE to see what decision would be made; if they too would join the indigenous uprising. A week after the initial march and on the early morning of October 5th, highland indigenous and campesino organizations returned to the streets for a road blockade. This time, the *compañeros* from Victoria del Portete joined them, and they shut down the Pan American highway just south of Tarqui. Campesinos and indigenous people also shut down parts of Azogues, Cañar, Tambo and Sucursal, such that most of Azuay participated in an uprising.

The new round of road blockades came after several days of discussing whether or not the indigenous movement was going to go to dialogue with the government. After a radical rejection of the dialogue conditions, CONAIE's position softened. There was a call by the indigenous movement to hold dialogue in Union Base, Pastaza—

209 FICSH, "Nación Shuar y Achuar Herida y Amenazada," October 1st, 2009.

210 El Universo, "Vía Puyo-Macas sigue tomada por protesta Amazónica," online report, September 30th, 2009.

211 El Universo, "Un muerto tras enfrentamiento en Morona Santiago," online report posted 5:40pm, September 30th, 2009.

headquarters of CONFENAIE—and firmly in indigenous territory. In the end, 2,000 indigenous people mobilized to Quito to dialogue with the government. Thus, the road blockades coincided with the government talks.

The mobilization of 2,000 indigenous people to oversee the dialogues with the government seemed to speak to both a moment of shaken confidence in Santi as a leader, and in the government's good faith effort to resolve the now multiplied demands: water law, mining law, Amazonian development, and indigenous territoriality, among others.

The dialogues were transmitted nationally by radio. One hundred and fifty indigenous leaders, an unprecedented number, were let into the Presidential Palace to dialogue with Correa. The dialogues took place simultaneous to the road blockades, a small victory for the indigenous movement who rejected dialogue conditions that Correa tried to impose. Through the tough negotiations, the indigenous movement and Correa drew up a six-point accord, which included the institutionalization of dialogues between the indigenous movement and the Correa administration, the investigation of Wizum's death by the Truth Commission, a review of the proposed of the Water Law, and reforms to the Mining Law.²¹²

Local indigenous politics

The following day, I took an early bus to Tarqui. An early morning assembly would determine whether the *paro* would continue. UNAGUA was increasingly positioning itself as a base of ECUARUNARI. But, the folks from the anti-mining

212 Acuerdo Dialogo CONAIE y Gobierno de Correa. ECUARUNARI website, <http://ecuarunari.org/portal/Acuerdo%20Di%C3%A1logo%20CONAIE%20-%20Gobierno%20Correa> published on October 10th, 2009, and accessed on March 10, 2012.

movement continued to make their own decisions, even if they were increasingly considering the actions of ECUARUNARI and CONAIE. The bus from the Feria Libre market took me close to where campesinos had shut down the Pan-American highway; just passed the entrance to central Tarqui but not quite before Victoria del Portete. It was considered a neighborhood called Santa Teresita. There were some buses and trucks lined up, parked on the side. People with kids, backpacks, and bundles walked through the blockade in hopes of catching the bus as it went to Cuenca.

I continued towards the crowd, gathered in a circle, in the middle of the road. It was mostly a group from San Pedro and a few people from Girón. Carlos began to speak in the megaphone, immediately addressing Correa's insults. During the dialogues with CONAIE, Correa attempted to break up unity between CONAIE and UNAGUA by saying that Carlos Perez wasn't even an Indian. "I will not accept that they insult my family... with pride my mother used to say that we came from the brave Cañaris. My mother is an indigenous mother, a campesina...I will not accept that they offend my mother...we indigenous people are like the puma..." and he reiterated his tale of the Cañari puma. "It's a paradox, the oligarchy of Cuenca, the bourgeoisie right wing, say that I am a haughty Indian (un indio *alzado*), in turn, President Correa says that I am not an Indian. It turns out that I have to put feathers on my head to be an Indian....My Indian blood is in my *shungo* [heart] it's in my veins and nothing or nobody will change that! Are we Indian compañeros?! He shouts out to the crowd, "Yesssss" they respond, enthusiastically clapping.

I was amazed the transformations that were rapidly taking place. Few people, if any that I knew had publically identified as an indigenous person or an *indio*- a term that could be used to describe someone that was in a subordinate position and poorly treated or oppressed. Carlos Perez' defined indianness as something inside, hidden from view. It was like the puma that was asleep, that was just being "awakened." Connections with the indigenous movement seemed to help bring "indianness" into view—like a kaleidoscope whose pieces shifted and new understandings and patterns emerged. This didn't mean that everyone embraced an indigenous or even an *indio* identity—several people continued to see themselves as mestizos. For instance Berta and her family argued that they were mestizas because they didn't speak an indigenous language anymore, twine thread, or walk barefoot. Regardless if people began to see themselves as Indigenous or not, what emerged was a collective movement around water politics led by indigenous-centered discourses.

In the end, the road blockades were called off. It was mostly men from some of the irrigation systems upstream, and close friends of Carlos Pérez, who opined that they should wait and see what comes from the CONAIE and Correa dialogues. A woman from San Pedro maintained that the road blockades continue. Water politics were a gendered affair and not always fair to the voices of campesina women whose bodies figured into the local narrative of indigeneity that Carlos drew upon to consolidate a political collectivity.

THE DROUGHT AS AN ACTOR

At the same time that UNAGUA and CONAIE protested for water law reforms, the country was undergoing a severe drought. Pictures of rail thin cows with rib-bones sticking out were plastered in the front page of the newspapers. The drought too became an actor in the assemblages around the water law; it helped underscore that campesino dreams for agrarian success are highly dependent on an equitable distribution of water. The lack of water materialized inequities over water in Azuay as it did elsewhere in the country.

I sat low, near the dirt floor, and turned the large wooden stick with two skinned guinea pigs over a small fire. I was sitting outside of Doña Berta's adobe kitchen, in her backyard, only a few days after the last road blockade. Chickens and kittens co-mingled eating the rice around us. Doña Berta put two rocks on either side of the wooden stump where the far end of the stick rested; surely as a way to prevent my inexperienced hands from running off the edge, and dipping the *cuyes* into the fiery ash below. It had been a long hot summer. Her four cows were not too far from us, grazing on grass the color of straw. It was a Sunday afternoon. At that time many of my conversations with people either focused on the mobilizations or on the drought. On this day, I initiated a conversation a conversation about the weather; I wondered how they were faring the drought.

"We get by by giving them the little water we have from the tap," Berta said. She turned over to the family's only tap, and the long black hose that ran from the tap all the way down to the field. Her daughter Mari momentarily unattached the hose from the

spigot to fill a bucket with water for the potatoes. “But that is only for them to drink. We don’t like to do it because a neighbor might see....for now we give them feed.” Her milk supply was down from thirty liters to eight, and although they usually kept some for themselves, the dry summer forced them to sell all of their milk. At 35 cents per liter, they were making just under \$3 a day (before paying for feed). They sold the daily milk supply in the early morning to Don Vasquez, a small yogurt and cheese producer in Cuenca, and would often buy back what they earned in the form of yogurt and cheese.

I continued to turn the *cuyes* and she occasionally stoked the fire by fanning it with a piece of cardboard. In a wistful voice she said, “how silly we were; we could have had something,” she referred to her small struggling family farm that lacked pasture land and water. She urged her daughter Mari, who was nearby peeling the potatoes in a bucket of water. “Tell her the story of your uncle...”

That day I learned that indigenous resource politics were not new to the area. Even if Berta, Mari, and Beatriz did not identify as indigenous, their family was tied up into local indigenous politics. Together, Mari and Berta began to tell me the story of Abel; Berta’s husband’s cousin who was from San Pedro. Both her husband and Abel were now deceased. Abel was a local leader of UNASAY, the Union of Campesino Organizations of Azuay. UNASAY-E is a base organization of ECUARUNARI and CONAIE but was not active in the water mobilizations. I paid a visit to the UNASAY-E office in Cuenca early in my fieldwork and found that the organization worked primarily on bilingual education in Azuay, but collaborated with UNAGUA and FOA who were spearheading the mining issue in the province.

Abel spent his time between Azuay and the city of Riobamba, hotspot of Indian organizing in the early and mid 1970s. Father Leonidas Proaño, stationed in Riobamba, helped start ECUARUNARI in 1972 and was an ardent supporter for indigenous and campesino land and education rights. Abel had close ties to both Proaño and ECUARUNARI. Abel was spearheading land takeovers in Victoria del Portete and the surrounding areas. According to the family story, he helped “liberate” some lands in Chumblín. I suspected that this was now the Comuna Sombrederas, located at the entrance of Kimsakocha, near San Gerardo. The Comuna had signed contracts with IAMGOLD for fence posts and irrigation systems. According to an UNASAY-E leader that I had interviewed early on in my fieldwork that land take over had gone awry and a person was killed.²¹³ A split in UNASAY followed, where some maintained an affiliation with the indigenous movement (UNASAY-E) and another an affiliation FENOCIN, the Confederation of campesino, indigenous, and black organizations (UNASAY).

Abel continued to advocate for land rights in the area by organizing mingas, where people helped each other out with their garden plots. “He was a good man” reassured Berta. “But he wanted to take away the gringos land in the *banda* [a flat area between the old and new Pan-American highway] and establish a cooperative.” The gringo’s that she referred to was the owner of La Europea—one of Ecuador’s largest cold-cut and preserved meat companies. He tried to gather ten or so families from San Pedro de las Escaleras to do a land takeover but there was a lot of criticism of the movement, “like today” Berta drew a comparison with the anti-mining movement. She

²¹³ Interview with Félix Montero, 5/28/09.

said that Abel was labeled a communist. Berta's husband, first cousin to Abel, was also weary. "he was a laborer in the city and he said it's just not right to take away land from other people. How would you like it if someone came over and took our land? It's not right." When her husband was alive, she told me that they had worked hard and acquired sixteen cows, more than four times of what she had now. And then she turned to me and said, "what kind of Catholicism is that?" she asks me, "what kind says that it's OK to take land?" Abel died before he could execute the land take over and La Europea still owned a large piece of land just north of Berta's house.

Our attention then shifted to a large swath of land, with strikingly green grasses just past her backyard. It was like seeing a golf course in the middle of a desert. A zigzag pattern was made with the fences that separated those who had irrigation and those who didn't, like her. I had noticed the same stark pattern from the bus window along the Pan-American highway, from Cuenca to Victoria del Portete. I asked her who owned that land. It was so striking. Berta commented that the bright green field was owned by a man from Girón, who migrated to the US and then came back and bought that land. Immigration had also deleteriously reconcentrated land in private hands. Berta told me that he had four hoses that goes to his plot, "he takes all the water," she commented. There's a stream that goes through his property. Apparently, her neighbor told her that he could take all that water from the stream. "It used to run above the knees" she said.

Berta's family did have some water; they had some land with irrigation in Corralpamba, a forty-five minute drive up the hill on a milk truck, but they lacked consistent access to water for all of their small parcels that were dispersed in

Corralpamba, San Pedro Escaleras, Churuguzo, and Barrio Las Americas. Not having water meant not having a stable family household income. Beatriz, with Berta's help tended to the four cows and a flock of sheep, while Mari sold Herbalife to her neighbors and friends. Berta's two sons, both living and working in New York, would sometime send money and sometimes they wouldn't. Piecing together the household economy was not easy, and subjected them to dependency on their kin and neighbors. For one Mother's Day, Berta's sons sent her a brand new refrigerator; something she never had. It remained in a cardboard box for months. She cried. Yet, other times the family had to borrow money to be able to pay tuition at the military school where Enrique, Beatriz's only son, studied more than an hour away.

The drought brought the current disparities over water to matter. It helped materialize the inequities over water by juxtaposing those who had irrigation with those who didn't. The drought, along with a lax water law helped turn the flat valley landscape into a patchwork of green and brown, divided by thin wire fences and wooden stakes. There was nothing that could make water reform more urgent. Yet, more than that, the drought also had the power to conjure up family histories of struggle and rights that had remained buried or unimportant until then. The story of Luis was also the story of what 'could have been'—and of what could still be: an agrarian present and future where subaltern campesinos make a livelihood from their land with a legitimate claim to resources held by the country's most powerful people and companies.

Materializing Agrarian Dreams

The role of water in making agrarian dreams materialize was most sharply articulated by Don Félix, a close ally of Carlos that lived in San Pedro. During one of the mobilizations in late September, I ran into Don Félix on an early morning bus. He supplemented his wife's dairy farming activities with income as a night guardsman. He was just getting off of work. We were both heading to San Pedro de las Escaleras. "Compañerita"—he affectionately called me, both a gendered and diminutive term. I sat next to him and we started to chat. "I don't think they came to much last night," he said referencing the CONAIE-Correa dialogues. Our conversation meandered and I asked him what he thought should be done. He believed that the government should strengthen agriculture by offering low interest, low cost loans, with long term pay-back schedules "so that we can improve dairy farming, because we want to *salir adelante*, we want to *superar*," Don Félix said. He already had in mind an elaborate plan to "develop" the area. He outlined his "four points" that were related to the "industrialization [*tecnificación*]" of the milk industry. The first was to carry out "a soil analysis, a well done one," he emphasized, "with *técnicos* to improve the pasture." He believed that with a little help pasture would grow twice as tall if not more and with more pasture the cows would produce more milk. "Another point," he said "improve the cow's race. I tell my neighbors, some listen and there are a few that don't, one has to have a pure race cow. Only a pure-breed cow gives 15, 18 liters." Ultimately, he declared, "we need to have people from the University, from the NGOs to come and help agricultural productivity."

His agrarian development plan appeared great in theory, but there was one hitch: water. “But without irrigation, nothing can happen, none of this can happen” he said. “Do you have irrigation?” I asked. Whenever I asked people about water, I felt that I was asking a deeply personal question, as if I was asking how much money they make. I hardly ever asked the question and I did only to my closest collaborators. “No, I don’t he said, no one in San Pedro does. “We had a proposal to put in irrigation where the intake point is for the drinking water” but he explained that people upstream in Victoria del Portete opposed the plan. “So we don’t have *riego*,” he lamented. “But what does that mean for the movement...” I asked. I knew there were inequities over water within the movement but I wanted to see how he thought about it. “Best to cover it up and be quiet so that we don’t start fighting among each other.” The contradictions momentarily overwhelmed me: the unity of the movement depended upon turning a blind eye to the inequities over water at hand that were found even within the movement.

I was struck by another aspect of Don Félix’s conversation. Don Félix used capitalist idioms when he spoke about “getting ahead” and “overcoming”—and to wanting something akin to capitalist notions of development. His agrarian dreams were perhaps a product of the industrialization of the dairy industry in the area that began most intensely fifteen years prior when Don Juan Carlos Serrano set up a milk cooling station and an industrial dairy farm. Don Serrano’s network of workers, ranch managers, veterinarians, middlemen, small milk producers, as well as artificial semen bought in from Canada, the US, and Europe ensured a profitable dairy farm. Yet, at the same time, Don Félix’s vision wasn’t just an individualist approach to development to amass wealth;

it co-existed with other ideas of development and social relations. He often spoke in the *we*—“we want to superar”—his actions and language was often oriented towards collective terms. In the course of my fieldwork, I had seen Don Félix’s “we” in action—Don Félix eagerly organized community bingos, fiestas, and fundraisers and was the former president of San Pedro de las Escaleras.

My anecdotes with Berta and Don Félix show the importance of understanding water and the lack of water as an agent in helping materialize agrarian dreams. Water is implicated and can be drawn into different kinds of political and economic scenarios and social relationships. What was at stake during this time, especially when water was at such critical shortage, was what kind of life-projects do people want to materialize and work for? For subaltern campesinos a stable livelihood from agriculture was not merely an agrarian dream but part of collective identities: no one I spoke with could think of a time when they didn’t have cows; their grandparents had cows, their parents had cows, and now they had cows: dairy farming and the ties to land that came with it, was the quintessential work and identity of highland campesinos, even if these identities were structured and produced through localized capitalist systems.

In examining the life-worlds that water can materialize, and the struggles that a lack of water can also materialize, I am reminded of a sticker that UNAGUA made and passed out during a march. On the left side, there was a picture of an open pit mine with a large tractor and dead animals. On the other side was a picture of a pristine lake, corn stalks, and children playing. In bold letters on the top of the sticker was written: “You decide.” The dichotomies were striking because they made visible two different

scenarios: destruction of nature or its preservation. Just as with these two images brought to life, water too could make two different realities possible: water could be drawn into IAMGOLD's dream to develop one of Ecuador's first industrial gold mine, making a large profit for a group of stockholders (and some pension plans afloat), or it could be drawn into collective use and help materialize the agrarian reform that remained incomplete and unrealized. Just as the UNAGUA sticker, Berta, and Don Félix showed, campesino livelihoods and identity were relational: not only dependent on each other but also dependent on water and nature. And, what was at stake was the collective material and social reproduction of Andean communities.

A Power outage

In October 2009, the government shelved the water law proposal for two months while they continued to dialogue with CONAIE. In the meantime, people in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui continued to organize community events related to water with Catholic priests accompanying the movement. This was the case in November when Alberta Acosta decided to launch his book "La Maldición de la Abundancia," against mining development in Tarqui. In this final section, I show how the event consolidated the relationships between the Catholic Church and the movement, and added a third ally: local media. After the Tarqui event, when the drought was in its worst moment, local newspapers began to cover local protests in a sympathetic light and even paid visits to Quimsacocha with the local movement.

The event was held outside of the home of a campesino couple who were active in the movement. Their home was a large two story cement house with a great cement slab

in the front. I drove to Tarqui with Luis Morocho from the water board and Father Gerardo Vasco— a new addition to the movement—who brought along two parishioners from his church. Father Gerardo was the deacon for one of the Catholic Churches in downtown Cuenca. Father Gerardo was a thin man with salt and pepper hair. His body language was rigid and his voice firm; and his style was that of a political leader or missionary rather than a priest. Apparently, his grand uncle was the first priest to translate the bible in Quechua in Ecuador. Carlos Perez’ father had one of the few remaining copies of the bible. A few days prior to the event, several of us, including Lourdes from the women’s group in San Pedro and Father Gerardo had meet with the archbishop of Cuenca and persuaded him to participate in the event. The connections between the Catholic Church and the movement deepened.

The book launching had an air of community *fiesta* and a political consciousness raising workshop. A group of women served piping hot beef stew made from the small bull Doñated by Don Serrano; a group of us from Quizha-Quizha helped organize a screening of a documentary film on the impacts of mining in Honduras; and some compañeros from the lowlands performed a hilarious skit about a campesino who sells his land to a mining company. The different activities were punctuated by *musica tradicional* played by a man from Tarqui and his two young children who were also new to the movement. Doña Sofia, one of the women from the movement, articulated the importance of holding these kinds of events to energize the movement. “If we don’t *animar*, people start to think that we have lost and that the miners won,” she commented. The book launching then was more than just a way for Acosta to present his book, but

was a way to “animar la lucha”—or to energize the movement. In other words, the movement was alive with changing affiliations and discourses that had to be constantly renewed and reenergized.

Monsignor Cabrera declined to take a public position against mining. However, he supported the movement by focusing on the connections between water and Andean and Christian spirituality. “In Christian and Andean conceptions, god, man, and nature....are intimately united, inseparable.” He continued, “earth, and everything it contains, is not an object to be bought or sold, like a commodity, it is our home....earth is our mother, our sister, our friend, that natures us; that is part of our existence.” He ended with promising to renew his commitment to “work for life, of human life and of nature’s life.” The archbishop entered political alliances with the anti-mining movement through articulating his version of *pachamamismo*—the idea of earth as a living being, which echoed Andean conceptions that nature is both a life force and should exist outside of market relationships.

Also important, was the presence of Nicanor Merchán, affiliated with the *El Mercurio* newspaper. Though he only give a brief introduction to the Alberto Acosta, a notable shift in the editorial line of his family’s newspaper. *El Mercurio* covered the community event with a title, “A social pact in defense of water,” and though it mentioned an anti-mining stance of the protestors, it did not represent them as radicals or irrationals as it had done in the past.²¹⁴ A favorable coverage of the movement and Kimsacocha increased in the following months as well. For instance, less than a month

214 *EL Mercurio*, “Pacto social en defensa del Agua,” November 23rd, 2009

later, Quimsacocha's three lakes were featured on the newspaper's Tourism section as an "impressive landscape" whose lakes were described as "splendid" and "enchanted." The article featured oversized pictures of the largest of the three lakes and two smaller pictures of the three lakes. A similar coverage was also evident in *El Tiempo*, the city's second most read newspaper. In late November, the newspaper's Sunday edition dedicated a full page with seven pictures of Quimsacocha. The article began, "Preservation. It is impossible to not be filled with admiration before one of the most sublime scenes of Azuay nature."²¹⁵ The article echoed the idea of Quimsacocha as a site of 'life' stating, "The presence of small trout that feeds on the algae...on the edge of lake is life in its purest state."²¹⁶

At the same time that the local newspapers were Quimsacocha as a site of life and natural beauty, editorials and op-ed pieces called for conservation and improved management of water supply. One for instance, titled, "Water, life itself," describes the critical state of water shortage in the country and views water as a "basic right that should be protected and provided by the State."²¹⁷ The op-ed pieces didn't really engage or support indigenous proposals for community and indigenous managed water supply, but they did point to the growing concern for the conservation of water supplies that emerged at the intersections of a severe drought and public debates over the future of water regulations.

215 EL Tiempo, "Un Recorrido por las tres lagunas de Quimsacocha," November 29th, 2009.

216 Ibid.

217 El Mercurio, "Agua, la vida misma," written by Gonzalo Clavijo Campos, November 23rd, 2009.

The drought that began to affect campesino pasture in October took a turn for the worse in November and into December 2009. The city of Cuenca—along with the rest of the country—had daily blackouts. Approximately 35% of Ecuador’s electrical energy supply comes from the Rio Paute, Ecuador’s largest hydropower dam.²¹⁸ The dam is located in Azuay, east of Cuenca, and is also fed by the Irquis and Tarqui rivers, which begin in Kimsacocha. Water levels had reached such a critically low point that the country was forced to schedule daily blackouts. Each day the local newspapers listed the names of the streets to be affected by a scheduled two to three hour time slot. Just like campesinos, urban lives were also dependent on water: dimly lit businesses in downtown Cuenca deterred shoppers and office work was disrupted as was the evening routine of watching the nightly news on TV.

CONCLUSION: KIMSACOGCHA AS SPACE OF LIFE

On December 12th, 2009, Carlos led us across a small creek towards a spot where some a tiny stream burbled up from a small crevice. He stood atop of a craggy rock. “This is our water source,” he declared through a white megaphone, “Quinhuaquaycu.” The thin stream joined with another stream to make the Irquis River. The hill just behind him was lined with small white stakes with numbers on them, these were markers of IAMGOLD’s core samples, but that day they looked like tiny grave markers. A couple hundred of us stood around as Carlos and then others who took turns with the megaphone reiterating the importance of water defense. The community trip to Kimsacocha was

218 EL Mercurio, “La Central Paute en extrema crisis” November 11th, 2009.

organized by UNAGUA as a popular education tool; as a way to get people to know where their water comes from and provide a material experience of Kimsacocha that was not mediated by tubes, facets, irrigation channels, and hoses at home. The growing network of allies were all present; the local media, gringos; catholic priests; and environmentalists from Cuenca and Quito.

This trip would mark the first time that Kimsacocha entered politics as a place where life begins—as a reservoir of sacred water. We boarded our respective buses and trucks and drove another few minutes down the road to an open expanse of *paja*. Marcel, Beatriz, her neighbor Doña Josefa, and I trekked the thirty minute hike behind a long trail of other people to the three lakes, or Quimsacocha proper. We descended down into the final dip where boulders and craggy cliffs edged a large lake. Carlos stood in a flat spot with his blue jeans tucked into his rubber boots, encouraging people to “get water from this lake with this holy, miraculous water for the blessing.” Padre Samuel, in his green chasuble, was about to start the first outdoor mass at Kimsacocha. Beatriz shyly pulled out an empty soda bottle to be blessed with water from the lake; she was no fan of Carlos Perez but *was* a die-hard Catholic. After all, this was the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe—her much revered virgin’s date, to boot.

Like the riverside mass two months earlier, the first outdoor mass at Kimsacocha pointed to the growing awareness of waters agency in creating and sustaining agrarian as well as urban life. Preceded by public debates over changing resource use regimes, a lax water law, and a severe drought, the religious ceremony and blessing of the water that followed, helped materialize Kimsacocha as a source of life—as a “temple of god”—as

Father Samuel would say—and as Pachamama. Interestingly, the three lakes held neither the gold deposits that IAMGOLD sought, nor was it near the Quinhuaahuycu stream; the three lakes actually belonged to the swath of land that the government supposedly earmarked for conservation, the 3,220 hectares (see Chapter 2). Turning the 3,220 hectares of conservation land into Kimsacocha a life-space or “*espacio de vida*” as Carlos Perez would call it was the work of a growing coalition of human and nonhuman efficacies.

By the end of 2009, campesinos had not only gained Kimsacocha as a space of life, but were also one step closer to having the law recognize the interdependent relation between campesinos and water. As a result of marches, road blockades, and dialogues with CONAIE, the government revised the draft law. The new draft water law made substantial changes in recognizing the rights of various entities including Pachamama, indigenous people, and campesinos. The law recognized Pachamama as the source of life, whose waters have the right to be conserved, holistically managed, and be repaired if contaminated.²¹⁹ The new draft law also added on a new chapter on the collective rights of communities, pueblos and nationalities to manage, conserve, protect, be consulted and participate in decisions regarding water use according to their own *cosmovisiones*, as well as the collective right to maintain, strengthen, and recuperate their spiritual, cultural, and ancestral knowledge and practices of water.²²⁰ Moreover, the law adopted CONAIE’s

219 See articles 34-37, “Ley Orgánica de Recursos Hídricos, Uso y Aprovechamiento del Agua” no date.

220 See articles 38-50, “Ley Orgánica de Recursos Hídricos, Uso y Aprovechamiento del Agua” no date.

proposal for the creation of a Plurinational Water Council to formulate and carry out national water policy.²²¹

Most critical for UNAGUA, the new version of the draft law also made changes in relationship to water and mining. The government replaced article 73, which had granted companies the “authorizations for the economic use of water for mining activities” with article 104, “no water will be authorized for use in the exploitation of mining within 2,500 feet of ecosystems associated with hydrological cycles that influence water sources.”²²² Article 74, problematic because it allowed for mining in headwaters if declared of national interest, was replaced by article 105: “authorization for...mining exploitation will not be granted inside the areas of influence of water sources.”

In spite of these new changes, the law was far from meeting the demands of UNAGUA or CONAIE. Carlos Perez believed that these were significant advances, but that they were not enough: “we need to be two steps forward, not just one.”²²³ In an UNAGUA meeting he told water board representatives that he was skeptical of article 105, which although sounded good in theory, still doesn’t not declare páramos free of mining. The dispute over language and framing were important; their proposal to declare páramos free of mining would ensure that projects in Kimsacocha, Molleturo, and Sigsig would not go through, but that wasn’t guaranteed under the latest draft. “We have to protect everything, the entire páramo, not just one part of it,” he said. Whereas the law

221 See articles 216 and 217, “Ley Orgánica de Recursos Hídricos, Uso y Aprovechamiento del Agua” no date.

222 A water source is defined in the draft law as areas where water begins, or is borne out of, including páramos, springs, wetlands, aquifers o recharge zones (zonas de recarga), glaciers, or snowy mountains, among othes. “Ley Orgánica de Recursos Hídricos, Uso y Aprovechamiento del Agua,” No date.

223 Notes from UNAGUA meeting, November 14th, 2009.

assumed that mining was an industry whose impacts could be managed and contained, Carlos viewed the industry differently: the páramo as an integral system that could be affected regardless if mining happened in water sources [fuentes de agua] or 2,500 meters from it.

As I have shown in this chapter, collaborations between campesinos and indígenas, a permissive water law, catholic priests, droughts, local media, and power outages converged to create a movement in defense of life. Bennett (2010), has examines the assemblage of human and nonhuman entities as having the ability to produce effects. In this case, the effect emergent from this assemblage was multiple: concrete reforms were made in the language of the draft water law, campesinos in Azuay recreated Kimsacocha as a Pachamama or a space of life, and most importantly, the anti-mining movement was reframed as a movement in defense of life and water. This reframing of the movement enabled campesinos and indigenous people to increase its political allies to include people like the Archbishop Cabrera who didn't want to position himself against mining, but was willing to position himself in favor of "life" and water. Political mobilizations around water also drew in campesinos from Azuay, with an ambivalent relationship to indigeneity, into CONAIE and ECUARUNARI's plurinational political project. Thus, the struggle for 'life' was not just about universal life, but was about the possibilities for subaltern mestizos, indigenous people, montubios and afro-Ecuadorians to live, work, and think about nature in ways that go beyond Correa's nationalist project based on resource extractivism and mestizaje.



Padre Samuel giving an outdoor mass on the river. Author's photo.

Chapter 6: Plurinational water politics

The chapter examines how tensions between the coalition for the defense of life and the state escalated over the water law. The water law not only had implications for mining extraction but more broadly, gained importance for the meaning and practices of a plurinational state. I follow the public debate. I show how movement leaders organized marches and protests to deepen water law reforms to benefit indigenous and campesinos. In doing so, they effectively framed the law as a limited piece of legislation that benefited economic elites. Repression of the movement followed, leading to the jailing of five movement participants including Carlos Pérez and Benjamin Macias. The state and private sector redeployed plurinational discourse as a way to undermine collective water rights of campesino and indigenous people. In the end, the state rescinded the controversial water law, an ambiguous win for the coalition in defense of life.

Most important, I conclude, were the gains made to the organization process of oppositional politics. Collaborations between the campesinos and CONAIE/ECUARUNARI had a lasting impact on collective politics locally and nationally. FOA and UNAGUA would become a base organization of ECUARUNARI and indigeneity emerged as a relational identity with the environment, creating a broad based movement for the creation of a plurinational state. What began as a movement against IAMGOLD transformed into a movement for a broader set of political, economic, and social goals led by indigenous discourses and environmental epistemologies.

REINITIATING THE WATER LAW DEBATE.

On March 3rd, 2010, from a stage set up in Cuenca's central Park, Carlos Pérez, took the microphone and shouted: "500 years of vilification, of ridicule, of mockery, of criminal trials, of jailing. 500 years of genocide, ethnocide, eco-cide. 500 years of oppression. But, the day has come to say no more oppression! The pueblo of Azuay, the pueblo of Ecuador, rises up to put our lives first!" The crowd shouted enthusiastically, "Correa, Correa listen the people have risen!" [Correa, Correa escucha el pueblo esta de lucha!]. With words that drew parallels between colonialism and present day politics, Carlos kicked off a new round of collective political mobilizations for water law reform.

The march, which began from the Parque de la Madre, to downtown Cuenca, had somewhere between 3,000 to 6,000 participants. People from all over the central and southern part of Ecuador came out for it. Featured speakers included Pepe Acacho, president of the Inter-Provincial Shuar Federation (FICSH, the organization's acronym in Spanish), Delfín Tenesaca, then-newly-elected president of ECUARUNARI, and Geronimo Yantalema, member of the National Assembly for the Pachakutik party. Yantalema was there in a ceremony to receive what was called "the Azuay Mandate." The mandate was a short public letter intended for the National Assembly, which declared a unification of the anti-mining movement in the south with the national indigenous movement, to "construct an economically and socially sustainable development model based on the principles of the Ayni, of reciprocity...to guarantee respect between brothers [and sisters] and above all, nature....We propose a commitment

to struggle against the capitalist, extractivist, neoliberal model...and demand that all laws [passed by the National Assembly] recognize the rights of nature and water.”

I previously described how mobilizations in late 2009 resulted in changes to the language of the law to reflect some, though not all, indigenous and campesino demands. Even after a round of revisions, the draft law—viewed from the perspective of campesino and indigenous organizations—still had three key problems: 1) it did not prohibit mining in páramos or water sources, 2) it relegated the Plurinational Council on Water as *part of* the National Water Authority, but not as *the* National Water Authority proposed by Pachakutik, and 3) the government would not revise present day water concessions/authorizations, which meant that severe inequities in water distribution would remain persistent, hardly improving the situation for the majority of small and subsistence indigenous and campesino producers. Moreover, state-CONAIE dialogues aimed to deepen water law reforms, revise the mining law passed in 2009, and address the death of Bosco Wizum, reached an impasse in December 2010. By January of 2010, ECUARUNARI began to lobby its bases for a new round of mobilizations.

A first meeting between water board leaders and users, and the indigenous movement was held on January 30th, 2010. A group of about sixty of us gathered in one of the facilities of the San Roque Catholic Church in Cuenca. It was the same church that housed the hunger strikers in early 2009 during the Mining Law mobilizations. Although UNAGUA usually held its meetings at the former CREA building, SENPLADES, the government entity that now managed the building, rejected UNAGUA’s petitions to use

the meeting space three times now, sending a clear message to the group that it would no longer support the organization of community water-boards.

Segundo Morocho, ECUARUNARI director of Organizational Strengthening and Politics and Assemblyman Geronimo Yanatelema opened the January meeting.

Yantalema was the only Pachakituk representative in the Assembly's Commission on Food Sovereignty charged with the task of writing the draft water law. Yantalema gave an update of the shortcomings of the water law and shared some riveting statistics. The private sector holds 1% of irrigation water permits but concentrates more than 64% of the nation's water flow and 63% of land. Meanwhile, "small farmers and the communal sector comprise 86% of water users have merely 22% of the land and [access] 13% of the water flow (caudal)." When he gave the statistics, the fidgeting and coughing temporarily stopped (only a child's murmur could be heard). The statistics described the situation of many people present at the meeting.

Yantalema proposed that the movement pursue a two-pronged strategy. First, continue to work through the National Assembly, "where article by article, letter by letter" the law is revised and debated, and second, social mobilizations. Because Azuay was recognized as the leader in water-related mobilizations nationally, he encouraged the water boards (with the participation of ECUARUNARI and CONAIE) to organize an action to kick off the new round of mobilizations in preparations for the second and final round of debate. He anticipated that the Assembly would pick up the water law again in April, but was convinced that actions needed to be taken just after Carnival. There was a

chance that the Assembly would start to approve articles in the Water Law even before Carnival.

In the meeting, mining emerged as the rallying point for mobilizations. Carlos persuaded water users to jumpstart a new round of mobilizations. He did this by pointing out why it was important to have the water law prohibit mining in the páramos (and not just 2,500 meters from water sources). As Carlos said “we are not up there monitoring.” To reinforce his point, he retold the story of how IAMGOLD tried to fool SENAGUA technicians. Campesino efforts to block IAMGOLD’s water petitions in September 2009, prompted SENAGUA to send field technicians to the Cristal River (located in Kimsacocha) to carefully review whether or not IAMGOLD’s water permits should be granted. According to Carlos, the Cristal river started with a flow of 12 liters of water per second, but then doubled downstream. This puzzled the technicians (as well as Carlos who accompanied the team) because there were no additional streams or springs that fed into the Cristal River. The inspection team headed back to the top of the river and found a tube from which IAMGOLD was pumping water from a lagoon into the river. Carlos concluded that IAMGOLD was trying to fool the inspection team to make the river appear to sufficiently met the campesinos and IAMGOLDs demands for water. Uncovering IAMGOLD’s unethical practices did not mean that the government would delay mining projects. In fact, Carlos held a thick document with a list of mining concessions in Azuay that overlapped with critical watersheds.

Yantalema reminded everyone that while there were tensions between mining companies and the government over the Water Law, the government still supported

mining development. The National Assembly passed the legal regulations needed to put into practice the Mining Law and developed the framework for establishing the National Mining Company. Moreover, the Constitutional Court continued to defer to make a decision regarding the Mining Law's constitutionality, a petition filed by CONAIE and UNAGUA several months prior. And, Yantalema added, even though the government agreed to revise the Mining Law as part of the dialogues with CONAIE, the review committee was never set up. Instead, President Correa sent, what Yantamela called, his "peons" with no decision-making capacity to dialogue with indigenous leaders. By this time, ECUARUNARI was no longer a part of the dialogue process, and it was likely that CONAIE would also formalize its decision to withdraw from the dialogues in late February when it held its national meeting.

Given the urgency around the water law and lack of movement in revising the Mining Law, the *compañeros* supported an action. One called for a march in the "*chuchaki* of Carnival," literally during Carnival's hang over. Even Mari, a strong critic of Carlos Pérez, was at the meeting and came out in support of a new round of street mobilizations. While the majority had proposed the 23rd of February as a date for the march, the date was set for March 3rd after CONAIE's assembly so that the indigenous movement could also be a part of the action. The objectives of the march were developed: that the water law prohibit mining activity in páramos and water sources; that the Constitutional Court to emit a decision regarding the Mining Law's constitutionality; and for the government to implement the Mining Mandate from 2008 (see Chapter 3).

Meanwhile, Acción Ecológica—the environmental NGO from Quito—along with UNAGUA planned a workshop in February for community leaders and bases on the impacts of mining, hydroelectric dams (also planned for the area), and Socio-bosque/Socio-páramo, a market based conservation mechanism that the government promoted. Carlos believed that more “socialization” was needed, especially as the coalition continued to pick up new members. By then, the mining districting map for the Kimsacocha páramo helped visualize the threat that mining posed to a new set of watersheds. It helped to expand the coalition to include old allies from the parish of Baños whose watershed would be affected by a cluster of Cornerstone concessions located to the north of IAMGOLD’s project.

CONAIE-State relations

By the time the indigenous leaders and campesinos met in January 2010, relations between CONAIE and the Correa administration were quickly deteriorating. Briefly, CONAIE and the state dialogues began to erode in mid December amid a controversial decision to shut-down a Shuar radio station. On December 17th, CONATEL (the National Communications Commission), cancelled the contract for the radio frequency used by “Voice of Arutam.”²²⁴ The radio station, established in 1972 with the help of Salesian priests, was identified by the state as the culprit of the outbreak of violence during the October 2009 protests. Indigenous leaders and organizations qualified Radio Arutam’s closure as an undemocratic decision made by the Correa government. CONFENIAE released a statement that its closure was a “provocation and demonstrations the

224 Jennifer Moore, “Ecuador: Politics closes Indigenous Shuar Radio”, January 20, 2010.

governments will to rupture the dialogues.” Moreover, CONFENIAE’s statement said that they had “come to the dialogue with an open spirit and sincere disposition...but as a response have only received constant verbal aggression and now the anti-democratic closure of Radio Arutam.”

Radio Arutam was broadcast from the Inter-provincial Federation of Independent Shuar Centers (FICSH, by its Spanish acronym), and worked to promote bilingual education and strengthen the collective rights of the Shuar. A Salesian priest, Father Juan, active in the anti-mining movement who serves Shuar communities said that it Radio Arutam was the only station “where you can talk about the potential impacts of multinational companies and the plunder of our territories.” Thus the move to shut down Radio Arutam implicated FICSH in the death of their compañero Bosco Wizum and was interpreted as a literal effort to “kill the voice of indigenous people of Ecuador,” as stated by Salvador Quishpe in his open letter to the President. In other words, CONATEL’s decision activated a wide-range of indigenous networks.

In late January, CONATEL revised its December decision and allowed for the radio station to remain open. The reversal came from a recommendation made by the Truth Commission who was charged with the investigation of Bosco Wizum’s death. Instead of shutting down the Radio Station, the Truth Commission recommended that the Attorney General’s office (Fiscalía General del Estado) investigate Pepe Acacho, FICSH president and director of Radio Arutum, along with three other FICSH leaders for the

death of the school teacher.²²⁵ CONATEL's board unanimously upheld the Truth Commission's recommendations.

The decision to investigate FISCH leaders for Wizum's death was just one more expression of the attack on indigenous organizations and the politics of criminalization of protests movements under Correa's administration. For me, and many of my compañera/os, it also pointed to the ways that the state seemed to misconstrue or distort reality—it blamed the death of the Shuar on the Shuar's own organization, even if his death came during an anti-riot police operation. The role of the anti-riot police operative was completely erased from the question of justice.

By the end of February 2010, CONAIE radicalized its stance in the context of more insults by the state. At their assembly, the indigenous organization terminated dialogue with the government on the basis of “lack of political will (on the part of the government), lack of respect of the rights of indigenous nationalities and peoples, and for lack of results.” The CONAIE's 21 point resolutions, included a radical list of actions to implement plurinational political project including : a call for a plurinational uprising against neoliberal and extractivist policies being applied by the state; to assume the management of the parks, forests, and páramos designated as national reserve and indigenous territories; hold the government responsible for systematic divisions, xenophobia, hate and racism, and persecution against all the pueblo and indigenous nationalities; prohibit the entrance of government authorities in indigenous lands and

225 Ecuavisa, “Radio Arutam no será clausurada, según Conatel,” 26 de Enero de 2010, accessed January 27, 2010.

<http://www.ecuavisa.com/noticias-nacionales/19898-radio-arutam-no-sera-clausurada-segun-conatel.html>

territories, and declare null all authorizations and concessions granted to and for mining, oil, lumber, pharmaceuticals, environmental services, and hydroelectric dams authorized by the state in ancestral lands and territories. CONAIE's rupture with the government energized a new round of water law mobilizations.

Critical Nodes

In late March 2010, only a few days after the election of the Yacu Ñusta, Carlos Pérez, Lourdes from San Pedro de las Escaleras, and two elderly women from Tarqui traveled to Quito. A group of sixty indígenas and campesinos presented the Commission on Food Sovereignty with a coalition document referred to as the “critical nodes” or *nudos críticos* in Spanish. Indigenous and campesino demands were articulated around three critical nodes: 1) Institutionalization of Water and Participation; 2) Economic Use of Water, Contamination, and Water Protection in Recharge Zones; and 3) the De-privatization and De-monopolization of Water.²²⁶ The three critical nodes joined together a set of demands that were a complete legislative overhaul of national water policy. It would end private sector domination of water, ensure small and subsistence farmers' access to irrigation water, grant communities binding consultation rights, establish a fund for community management and protection of water recharge zones such as páramos, demarcate these as areas of exclusion for extractive industries, and place national water

226 “Documento de acuerdo de las organizaciones sobre nudos críticos del proyecto de ley de recursos hídricos,” no date. Signed by: Delfín Tenesaca (ECUARUNARI), Rafael Guilichico (JAAPRE—an irrigation and drinking water board association formed in June of 2009 as a response to the water law), Wilmer Gonzalez Sanchez (UCAE—the Union of Campesino Organizations of Ecuador), Carlos Pérez (FOA, Federation of Indigenous and Campesino Organizations of Azuay), Maria Lara Angulo (FEUNASSC, a campesino social welfare organization), and Moises Isigna (INTERJUNTAS—a federation comprised of water users)

management policy and administration in the hands of indigenous, campesino, afro-Ecuadorians, environmental, and social organizations as well as the state government. It was an ambitious set of demands that if incorporated into the law and respected in practice, could radically transform social, material, and political structures in the country.

By the time of their arrival in Quito, the Commission on Food Sovereignty was in midst of fast-tracking the approval of the water law. Presided by Jaime Abril, Alianza País party member and Azuay representative, the commission approved approximately 80 articles of the draft water law. Once the Commission approved the remaining articles in the law, the draft law would then be sent to the National Assembly Plenary for the second and final round of debate. The plenary debate was scheduled for April 8th, 2010.

STATE-INDUSTRY ALLIANCES

Clashes over the water law flooded television and radio waves. Cuenca's Voice of Tomebamba radio interviewed a range of actors involved in water law disputes. One morning, the station featured an impassioned exchange between Carlos Pérez and Jaime Abril over the water law.²²⁷ A defensive and argumentative Abril insisted that article 5 of the law already guaranteed the no privatization of water, implying that indigenous demands didn't make sense because what they were asking for was already recognized in the law. Pérez with an equally exasperated and high-pitched tone cited article 91 to argue otherwise. This article grants industry access to water. As he tried to explain that the draft

²²⁷ The debate between Jaime Abril and Carlos Pérez was broadcast live on Voice of Tomebamba (Voz de Tomebamba) on April 2nd, 2010.

law doesn't eliminate the privatization of the water, Abril tried to interrupt him to say that it did. Both ended up talking over the other.

Crucial to the debate was whether the draft law—if passed— would apply to past and present water concessions. Abril insisted that this was not necessary given article five clearly prohibits the privatization of the water, but Pérez said that without an audit of current water concessions, the law would only apply to future water concessions, not current ones, leaving water in the hands of private entities.²²⁸ Abril insisted that they were on the same side of the debate, but Pérez pointed that if they were, then why resist writing a transitory disposition into the draft law that would audit all water concessions? Finally, Abril blurted out, “we can't leave industry without water.” Here, he revealed ultimately what campesinos and their leaders were trying to prove: that the so-called revolutionary state was just a wolf dressed in sheep's clothing. For many in the movement, Correa's administration—like previous neoliberal administrations—continued to uphold private sector interests. When the debate reached the topic of prohibiting mining in páramos and water sources, the two reached another frustrating impasse. Abril insisted that the law would protect water resources and Carlos arguing that it would not go far enough.

After a week of legislative debate, the Commission was still unwilling to consider indigenous and campesinos demands articulated in the critical nodes document.

Campesinos and indígenas returned to the streets on April 7th, on the eve of the second and definitive round of legislative debate. Thousands of people marched in Cuenca, as

²²⁸ Ibid.

well as the northern and central Highland cities of Ibarra, Riobamba, Quito, among others to demand that the Assembly pick up the “critical nodes.” Police presence was heavy and barred many busloads of protestors from joining the protests.

Interestingly, alliances between water board leaders and the indigenous movement opened space for indigenous identities to emerge. I walked into Carlos’ office a couple of days after the march to see what happened in Quito. Immediately after the march in Cuenca, Carlos travelled to Quito to accompany CONAIE, ECUARUNARI, and Pachakutik leaders in the efforts to lobby the National Assembly to delay the approval of the draft law. I found him, Luis Morocho, and the young secretary, Celia (from Tarqui) joking around. Carlos teased Celia saying that her family has inter-married to maintain the “line.” She laughed and he continued to joke saying that she wouldn’t marry a “Morocho,” (an Indian), poking fun at a potential love match between Celia and Luis. The jokes showed the salience of the ways in which race was read through last names. Celia defended herself, saying that she wasn’t afraid to use her indigenous last name, “Tulcay.” Her sister, in turn, preferred to use their “Astudillo” last name. Her uncle, also by the last name of Astudillo, was a well-to-do Cuenca business man who ran one of the largest import companies in the city. Luis turned to me and explained that inter-marriage in Tarqui, especially in Tutupali, where Celia’s family was from, was very common. Luis called this racism, saying that people in Tutupali didn’t want their kids to marry *indios* so they married to their close relatives instead, “first cousins too,” he added for emphasis.

Our conversation turned to the water law. A small victory came from the mobilizations: the national assembly delayed the second round of legislative debates until

the 25th of April. From the wooden bench in his small office, Carlos told us that although he didn't want to go to Quito, he knew that other CONAIE and ECUARUNARI leaders could not represent the mining issue in the same way. Facilitated by Yantalema, indigenous leader met with the Commission president, Jaime Abril, an Azuay Assembly member for the Alianza País party. Carlos recounted to us what happened: "I told Jaime, I recognize that you are open to have us here, but there is not a will to listen to our proposals and incorporate them in the law." He invited Abril to a public dialogue in Cuenca [with campesinos] to which Jaime immediately refused. He had recently been in Riobamba, hotbed of Indian organizing, where *comuneros* stopped short of giving him an *ortigada* (beating with stinging nettles). Carlos laughed. In the end, Fernando Cordero, President of the Assembly granted an extension under the condition that the commission meet at least three days each week to make adjustments to the final text of the water law, prioritizing the critical nodes.

Reframing the Privatization of Water

At the same time that the indigenous movement questioned the law, private industry also stepped up their lobby efforts. Shrimp farmers, or at least their employees, held a protest on April 8th, which coincided with the CONAIE protests, to overturn article 103 that prohibited the establishment of shrimp farms along beaches or in mangrove forests²²⁹. This article would benefit Afro-Ecuadorian women in particular who make a modest living from gathering shell fish along beaches with mangrove forests. But, the revision of the article at the behest of Ecuador's multi-million dollar shrimp industry was

229 El Comercio, "El art. 103 de la Ley de Aguas será reformado," April 9th, 2010.

reportedly accepted by the vice-president of the National Assembly.²³⁰ Even the Chamber of Industry in Guayaquil opposed the law because it prioritized human consumption over economic use of water (in articles related to the *prelación de uso de agua*), granted consultation rights to communities (though these were not binding—a contentious point for indigenous and campesinos), introduced a new set of tariffs and taxes around water use.²³¹ Overall, the Chamber of Industry argued that the law would affect production and increase unemployment.

Pacts between conservatives and Alianza País deepened, which had the effect of maintaining the privatization of water. Pedro de La Cruz, leader of FENOCIN (The National Federation of Campesino, Indigenous, and Black Organizations) was elected to the Assembly as an Alianza País legislator and also served on the Commission of Food Sovereignty. de la Cruz had sided with his party during the most of the water law debates; however, he began to question the official Alianza País party-line. He filed a motion in the Commission to revoke Interagua’s water concession. Interagua is a private consortium which provides water and sewage service in Guayaquil.²³² The company was once co-owned by the US firm Bechtel and has been held up by state and activists as an example of the problems associated with the privatization of water services: namely, high water tariffs and low-quality services. The Ombudsman (Defensor del Pueblo) in 2007 recommended the revocation of the Interagua’s concession on the basis of excessive

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ EL Comercio, “La Ley de Aguas preocupa a industriales,” April 14th, 2010.

²³² El Comercio, “Nueva división por la ley de Aguas,” April 21, 2010.

water tariffs, but no action was taken against the water firm.²³³ In 2009, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MIDUVI) audited Interagua and confirmed distortions in the price of water services for the urban poor.²³⁴ de la Cruz' motion to overturn Interagua's water concession was rejected.²³⁵ A few days later, the newspaper reported that Interagua's contract was renegotiated and "revalidated" for twenty-one more years. Interagua would introduce a "popular" water tariff of 10 cents per cubed meter of water (m3) for the city's poorest neighborhoods based on recommendations by the state.²³⁶ The renegotiated contracts were framed—not as an example of privatization—but as an example of the state undertaking its due diligence.

Even Jaime Nebot, the mayor of Guayaquil and public enemy to Correa, defended the decision. Nebot, affiliated with Ecuador's conservative Social Christian Party, said that the renegotiation of Interagua's contract was not a privatization of water. Instead, it was a "service concession," which was "convenient and absolutely constitutional. Water continues to remain in the hands of the State."²³⁷ In a meeting, one of the indigenous leaders said that it doesn't matter whether they are called "privatization" or "service contracts" that they are the same thing.

233 Public Services International Research Unit, University of Greenwich, UK. "Interagua," <http://www.psiru.org/companies/interagua> (accessed on April 20th, 2012).

234 Ibid.

235 El Comercio, "Nueva división por la ley de Aguas," April 21, 2010.

236 EL Comercio, "Interagua cobrará ahora una 'tarifa popular' de USD 0.10," April 23rd, 2010. Note: the 'popular rate' came with many restrictions: it would only apply to people who lived in houses that were 36 square meters and who lived in neighborhoods with no sewer systems or pavement. This would mean that it would only apply to approximately 25,000 of the Guayaquil's most poor families. That being said, the 'popular rate' would reduce the price of water anywhere from 10 -20 centers per cubic meter (m3) for these families.

237 Ibid.

Industry lobby efforts paid off. The draft law was approved by the Commission on Food Sovereignty on April 20th. Alianza País struck a pact with Madera de Guerrero, a new arm of the Social Christian party representing the conservative economic elite of Guayaquil. The draft law was approved six to five. Abril defended the law saying that it respects the investments of private investors given that they contribute to economic development. Three other legislators, including Yantalema and de la Cruz planned to submit their own draft of the law as minority bills.

The critical nodes were sidelined. Unlike the first round of debates where indigenous and campesinos effected changes in language to the law, the second draft made few if any changes that were reflected in the critical nodes document. The National Assembly (AN) plenary was scheduled for May 4th and would seal the fate of indigenous and campesinos' access to water. A massive indigenous uprising was eminent.

THE MOBILIZATIONS FOR THE DEFENSE OF LIFE AND WATER

“Beep, beep, beep.” It was 1 am on the morning of May 4th, 2010. I woke from bed, inches away from the beds of Beatriz, Mari, and Berta. We had just missed the bus. The honking came from the *25 de Agosto*, a local bus cooperative that was normally charged with the Victoria del Portete—Cuenca—Victoria del Portete route. But this time, the bus cruised slowly along the old Pan-American highway picking up people and taking them to the Y de Tarqui for the uprising. Other cars, mostly trucks passed by filled with people, tires, or cardboard. Mari and I headed out, while Beatriz and Berta stayed behind. Beatriz said, “someone has to milk the cows.” She and Berta would tend to the household and agricultural chores and join the *paro* later.

It was a pitch black, rainy morning. Yes, the rains had finally come, and now they didn't let up. When we arrived to the Y de Tarqui we saw a group of about 60 police in anti-riot gear. The thick bullet proof vest inflated their chests making them seem bigger than they really were. They stood in two lines on the road letting cars and trucks pass. Two groups of people, perhaps no bigger than forty or so each, stood on the edge of the road casually talking. We had gone up to one of the groups. A few people complained that no one from Victoria del Portete had come yet. They were upset. It reminded me of when I have heard people from Tarqui or San Pedro claim that people from Victoria del Portete treat them like *indios* because its only people from SPE and Tarqui that *lucha* [go out and fight], meanwhile people in Victoria reap the benefits. In these moments, the tensions within the heterogeneous coalition began to surface.

Mari and I ran into Don Chemo and, as a way to escape the insistent rain—and pass the time—we decided to hop into his fire-engine red truck to see if road was blocked at the southern end of the parish, where the old and new Pan-American highway meet. Briefly, the road blockades in Tarqui were a part of a national uprising called on by a broad campesino and indigenous coalition led by CONAIE as a final attempt to influence the Water Law. CONAIE planned a massive march in Quito that would end in a take-over of the National Assembly building. Meanwhile, they let their base organizations decide what actions they would take in support of the uprising. Most communities and pueblos, along the Andean highlands made the decisions to go to a road blockade. In the areas immediately surrounding Cuenca, communities and pueblos organized and distributed themselves into three main road blockades: the Y de Tarqui, Santa Marianita

(just outside of Girón), Nabón, and the suburban parish of San Joaquín. San Joaquín was a relatively new ally, who joined the struggle in protection of the “Bio-corredor” of Yanuncay. A hydroelectric dam was planned for their watershed. Although the hydroelectric dam was planned by state institutions, activists speculated that because of its location, it could supply electricity to IAMGOLD or other mining projects planned in Kimsacocha. In this way, mining and the infrastructure to make mining viable, generated and created new connections among activists.

As we drove away from the paro in Don Chemo’s truck, a police bus began to honk and flash its lights behind us. Don Chemo drove at a snail’s pace but didn’t stop. The bus caught up to us and for a moment none of us dared to breathe. Don Chemo concealed old tires to burn for the protest under a plastic tarp in the bed of the truck. A policeman in riot gear stood with the bus door open and waved at us to stop. Don Chemo stopped but kept the car idling and rolled down the window. “Do you know how to get to Santa Marianita?” he asked. “Other way” Don Chemo told him. After wards, we all giggled. Don Chemo sent them in the wrong direction.

I was not sure whether or not the police were really lost or if they stopped us as an intimidation tactic. Regardless, their presence foreshadowed an onslaught of repression, police abuse, and detentions that would unfold later in the day. Over four hundred police were dispatched that from the Ecuadorian coast to contain the protests in Azuay.²³⁸ We drove to the end of “Portete” as it was called and turned back around. All was quiet. We drove back to the paro, but now the rain was coming down hard. People started to

238 This figure is according to an unofficial interview I had with a police man during the protests.

head back to their home. “Don’t go” Mari yelled out of the window. She was worried that they wouldn’t come back. And then some would yell back that they were going home to “drink a coffee” (have breakfast), or take care of the animals. People still needed to milk the cows, even if they wouldn’t be selling their milk on the market that day. Mari and I fell asleep listening to Don Chemo’s military stories until he too finally dozed off.

At day break, people streamed into the Y de Tarqui, slowly, steadily, and sometimes, by the truckload. We contemplated getting out but the rain continued to fall softly but persistently. Mari didn’t have anything more than a light weight zip up. Then, I saw Benjamin’s beat-up truck. “Look, it’s the *ingeniero*,” I said. Mari immediately got out, and we joined him and others. People began to heave large and small rocks from a ditch into the road as well as jagged pieces of cement. One person waved to the cargo truck trying to cross, “there’s no pass, no pass.” Police immediately marched down to the spot in formation. They kicked the smaller rocks off the road with their black combat boots and heaved the others back into the ditch.

It was not surprising that the women were the first ones to take the road. A woman with a checkered *chalina* around her shoulders, a bright pink pollera, and rubber boots put herself in front of a grey Vitara that was trying to pass. Mari saw what was going on, and said, “let’s go”. I stood on the side of the road as Mari joined the woman. A large crowd surrounded the car. The police shoved the women with plastic shields but to no avail. “We have the right to express ourselves,” yelled the woman, “We came here with our hands clean,” she said referring that they hadn’t come armed. Then suddenly, Doña Norma—who I had not seen in marches or protests since 2008 when she left

CNDVS—joined the women and the three of them sat in the middle of the road. The grey Vitara turned around and people cheered. The police soon lost control over the crowd.

Jennifer and Silvia arrived shortly after the road was taken. Jennifer was writing an article on the uprising. We gathered to chat and without warning, the police assembled themselves into a single line across the road and launched tear gas. Most of us ran towards the pastures on either side of the highway. When the cloud cleared, word spread that Carlos Pérez, Benjamin, and another man were arrested. Angry, Carlos' mother, tried to stop police from detaining her son. She briefly recounted what happened.

“Some [police] took my son by the arms and the other took me by the braid and dragged me; but I wouldn't let go of my son. We fell to the floor and they stepped on me, they took my arm like this and stepped on my hand and then twisted my other hand.”

As the police tried to pry her from her son apart so that they could arrest Carlos they also hit her head, and she complained of a headache. Her knee was bruised. I was overwhelmed with outrage at the police abuse that unfolded. There was a discussion of whether people should go to Cuenca to the Provisional Detention Center (CDP, by its Spanish acronyms) where the men were detained. People decided to stay and hold down the road closure and continue to confront the anti-riot police.

There was also a rumor that Don Gilberto from Girón was also arrested at the Santa Marianita road blockade. Luis Morocho, who was supposed to be there wasn't

answering his phone so we couldn't confirm the information. Silvia, Heather, and I decided to drive to Santa Marianita first, then to San Joaquin to record the names of people arrested. We got into Silvia's car, and took an alternative route through the center of Tarqui (a ways in from main Pan-American highway), which would lead us back to the Pan-American Highway. After passing the center of Tarqui, we took a small dirt road heading south. The one lane road was clogged with small SUV's from various government agencies trying to get to and fro. Drivers waved to us, "there's no way to pass." We ignored their warnings. A group of ten men and women blocked the small access road with a thick piece of tree trunk. We negotiated our way through the blockade.

Back on the Pan American, Don Gerardo manned another blockade with tree trunks, small but pointed rocks, and traffic polls with orange reflectors. "No passing," he joked as he let us pass. Less than half a mile down the road, large semi trucks were parked horizontally across the road. A woman was yelling at a driver. I suspected that they were part of the industrial elite of Victoria del Portete. We had no luck with them so we took another access road to snake back to the old Pan-American, through Victoria, and then catch up back with the main Pan-American.

When we got to Santa Marianita we parked behind a long line of small cars, buses, and more government agency cars. The situation was calm at the blockade. Police hung out in small groups looking bored. Five of them were crammed inside of a tiny store snacking on salty treats. A group of women in *polleras* sat on a hillside. It turned out that Don Gilberto wasn't arrested; he was fuming with anger. The mayor—who had supported the anti-mining movement—sent out the municipal tractor to clear the road by

force. In an attempt to clear the road, five women were dragged by the police. The mayor had left for Cuenca to talk to the Governor.

Hugo, along with a contingent from Santa Isabel was at the blockade, as was Father Samuel. Hugo was amped—he surged with energy. He interpreted the attempts to stop the road blockade with a popular saying: “we are like the *paja* of the mountains, they might burn us, cut us, step on us, but there we are growing back, multiplying in quantity.” We didn’t stay long and headed towards San Joaquin, where another two people were arrested. We spoke to Lucía from Acción Ecológica. She reported that in Quito about 3,000 people had marched and about 500 of them forced their way into the National Assembly to take it over. Pachakutik Assembly members put pressure on the governor of Azuay to ease the repression and let those detained go but apparently Correa had ordered that they maintain in detention because they are being charged with terrorism.

In San Joaquin where the Yanuncay Bio-corredor struggle was the strongest, the situation was similar to what happened in Tarqui. Two leaders were detained in the midst of police efforts to clear the road with tear gas. A woman, with thick hands blackened with soot, told us that she was dragged. Another man was hit on the head by police. The repression and detentions took place at 8am, at the same time that the repression happened in Tarqui.

When we travelled to the CDP, we interviewed Carlos and Benjamin through a ten by 15 inch opening with thin bars placed vertically and horizontally. The five men were in a holding cell. At the time the police hadn’t emitted a “parte,” which I understood to be a report that recorded the reason for their detention. Without this report, no legal

actions to get them out of jail can be done. It was as if there was no record of them in jail. We worried about what could happen to them without the police report.

A judge fast-tracked the case against them for sabotage and terrorism, for which they could be sentenced eight to twelve years in solitary confinement. Later that day, the five of them were sentenced to jail as a ‘preventative’ measure.²³⁹ In the Ecuadorian court system, people who are at risk for fleeing the country can be sentenced to ‘*prision preventiva*’ as a cautionary measure while they await court hearing for the crime they are suspected of committing. In the case of two of the leaders of San Joaquin, they were charged not only with sabotage, but aggravated sabotage for injuring two police men. According to Carlos, the judge that ordered their preventative detention was cousin of Fernando Cordero—President of the National Assembly. There was speculation that the judge’s ruling was politically motivated and ordered from the State.

Jennifer, Marcel, Silvia, Pablo, and I regrouped at a small restaurant in Cuenca. Silvia’s eyes were red; she had been crying and Jennifer hung her head between her hands. Jennifer was coordinating with CEDHU—a human rights organization in Quito—to denounce the detentions internationally. CEDHU was an ally of the anti-mining movement. They had worked on the criminalization of activism in 2008. When I spoke to Lucía she told me to denounce the cases against the five leaders to local human rights in Cuenca. The problem, as we all noted that day, was that there was no human rights

²³⁹ In the Ecuadorian court system, people who are at risk for fleeing the country can be sentenced to ‘*prision preventiva*’ as a cautionary measure while they await court hearing for the crime they are suspected of committing

organizations in Cuenca. We spoke about forming a human rights organization or committee at least, in Cuenca that could be supported by CEDHU in Quito.

The following day, Rebecca, wife to Carlos, organized a massive assembly with delegates from different social and popular movements in the South, even with those that had not joined the initial uprising. As I walked into the packed auditorium, I bumped into Doña Rosita and two other women from the Defensoras de la Pachamama. The divisions and tensions between the women and the water boards did not stop them from attending the meeting. But, they did hurry off to a meeting with the Pachamama Women's Defense Front. Carlos' mom sat in the front of the auditorium with a hand painted sign that read: "Liberty for my son Carlos." Another woman, also in an orange *pollera*, held another sign, "Water is life, [and] life is and will always be our campesino struggle." After much discussion and debate, the group decided to maintain mobilizations and agree on a legal strategy. A group of lawyers filed a *habeas corpus* but Carlos' lawyer filed for an *Acción de Amparo*—both are intended to protect the rights of those wrongly detained. The *habeas corpus* would be withdrawn. People from Nabón had blocked the road that morning and folks from Girón decided to go back to a road blockade at 2pm if the men were not freed.

Campesinos and their allies flooded the open patio of the provincial court in anticipation of a new hearing. Although the action started off as a demonstration, anti-riot police locked us inside of the stone court-yard. We didn't know for how long we would be locked in. A diabetic woman pleaded that they let in some juice but the police refused. Later, allies were able to negotiate the passing of food—bread, banana's, and water to

maintain us. Several hours passed, and the five men, accompanied by police. The policemen quickly rushed the men up a set of stairs for the hearing. People began to shout, “*Libertad! Libertad!*” A group of campesina women from Tarqui and San Pedro kneeled in front of a small altar and prayed for their liberty. The President of the Provincial Court approved the *acción de amparo* and released the five men from detention for lack of evidence. However, the public prosecutor initiated investigations to gather evidence that they committed acts of sabotage and terrorism.

The following day, Carlos Pérez was interviewed on Voz de Tomebamba where he denounced the Correa administration for the criminalization of social protests. Correa, he believed, used “justice as a tool of repression” to dampen activism against the water law. Carlos understood his detention as a lack of independence between the judicial system and the presidency. The police report, when it was finally emitted, described the five men’s arrest as a violation of several charges including obstruction of public roads, assault to police, and sedition. However, when the case went to the public prosecutor, Carlos stated that those charges were “turned into” sabotage and terrorism. Carlos believed that “orders from above,” referring to Correa’s Ministry of Government, was responsible for their charge for sabotage and terrorism.

This was not the first time that anti-mining activists were charged with sabotage and terrorism. In early 2008, the National Constituent Assembly—then comprised of social movement allies and leaders—pardoned over 200 rural and urban environmental activists who faced criminal charges for their involvement in mining and oil protests during 2007. Now, in 2010, few social movement allies were part of the government. As

a consequence, rural and urban activists appeared to be more vulnerable to legal repression. For instance, in Nabón, eight campesinos were sentenced to prison under charges of sabotage and terrorism for vandalizing mining company machinery. They eventually fled their prison sentence and hid in the mountains until they were pardoned in 2012.

In cases where rulings favored campesinos, the consequences could be dramatic. In September 2009, the Peoples' Ombudsman of Azuay was pressured by the state to step down from his post shortly after he ruled in favor of campesinos in their water dispute against the Eljuri family. The former ombudsman cites Correa's relationship with the Eljuri family as the cause of his dismissal from the post.

For Tino, Carlos Pérez' lawyer and long-time friend, the problem wasn't that Correa's administration had introduced new legal frameworks for the criminalization of protests (even though it had in the constitution) but that the judicial system under his presidency was mobilizing old laws in new ways such as to introduce stiffened fines and jail time. He believed that it was a way for the government to create a sense of fear and intimidation in the protest movement.

THE STATE: RESIGNIFYING PLURINATIONALISM

During the protests, the Correa administration aired what was called a *cadena obligatoria*, an obligatory radio announcement that defended the government's water bill. The ad was representative of the ways in which the Correa administration mobilized plurinational discourses to defend the water bill. Correa resignified the concept to promote the interests of "the nation." Plurinational discourses were developed and

conceptualized by the indigenous movement as a set of de-colonial state reforms that granted extensive collective rights to indigenous and afro-Ecuadorians over territory and political domains. However, Correa mobilized plurinational discourses against indigenous collective rights by suggesting that indigenous resource rights were *particular* interests that went against the interests of the “nation.”

On the morning of May 5th, I listened to and recorded the *cadena obligatoria*. It played the morning after the protests and detention of the five leaders. The announcement began with an explanation of the benefits of the water bill: it protects food sovereignty, does not privatize water, and ends water monopolies. The announcement spliced the virtues of the water law with belligerent commentary against coalition activists made by Correa, such as this one:

“We cannot cede to pressure tactics...we cannot let them manipulate us because they want to control water and go against the interests of the community. Ecuador is a plurinational and multi-ethnic country. The Citizen’s Revolution government defends everyone’s interests and not just a sector of society.”²⁴⁰

Correa represented the nation—a plurinational and multi-ethnic body—as a “community” whose rights were at risk by an irrational group of people that had *individual* interests in controlling water. In this sleight of hand, Correa reframed indigenous and campesino resource rights as one of individual property rights, as if they were demanding exclusive control over all of the country’s water resources. In doing this, he discursively positioned the coalition’s demands for participation in water policy as

240 Cadena Obligatoria, Voz de Tomebamba, May 5, 2010.

equivalent to private sector interests. The equivalency argument disregarded the historically-informed political platform that guided the coalitions work: rural campesino, indigenous, and afro-Ecuadorian communities, dedicated to small-scale or subsistence agricultural activities, have little access to water supplies and little voice in water policy.

By using the term “plurinational” to describe the national body, or universal interests, Correa implied that the indigenous and campesino rights were a violation of the principles of Plurinationalism. It was as if there was only a limited set of water rights in the country and indigenous water rights would take away other peoples’ water rights. This positioned Correa as a defender of the plurinational state that represented *everyone’s rights* not just indígenas or campesinos. This was summarized by the announcement’s emphasis: “Access to water is *everyone’s* right.” The discursive community of the nation invoked in his impassioned announcement included “everyone” even private companies. By not specifying who exactly was part of the “everyone” in the nation, Correa’s framing of water rights protected *hacendados* and private companies, lent itself to multiple interests.

Private companies—or at least private interests—latched onto Plurinational arguments made by Correa. Shortly after this announcement aired, I heard a commercial on Radio Canela—a nationally syndicated music station. The announcement was paid for by a group called Ecuadorians for Equality²⁴¹. It repeated the ideas framed in Correa’s

241 It was unclear who exactly comprised the group Ecuadorians for Equality. The commercial repeats concerns over bottled water, so it could be that the commercial was paid for by a consortium of bottled water companies. Or, if not, an off-shoot organization of Alianza País, President Correa’s political party.

attacks on indigenous resource rights but was far more aggressive. The ad featured two male friends talking. I've transcribed an excerpt below:

Friend 1: I don't understand why certain indigenous leaders want to impose their particular interests with violence and control water...

Friend 2: Right. They forget that the constitution recognizes us as an inter-cultural and plurinational country, in other words, not just *indígenas*. Mestizos, Montubios, whites, indigenous, afros, all of us live here and are part of the nation; we all have a stake in water. They say that they want to exclusively manage bottled water, mineral water, and irrigation.

Friend 1: that's awful and on top of it, it's anti-democratic.

Friend 2: that's right. In other words, after the [soccer] game we will have to be begging that it rains, because bottled water, *nanay* [there won't be any].

Friend 1: Even worse, these indigenous leaders lie and manipulate their people.

[...]

The advertisement ends with a women's voice: "Enough of impositions. All Ecuadorians are equal. All Ecuadorians have the same rights to water. Ecuadorians for Equality."

The advertisement echoed the discursive strategy used by Correa. The advertisement represented indigenous and campesino water rights as a *particular* set of interests that went against the collective interests of the plurinational state. The listing of the different ethnic and racial make-up of the Ecuadorian national body placed each

group alongside each other gave the illusion that the rights of whites, indigenous, and afro-Ecuadorians were weighted equally in the country. But, this discursive strategy elides the racism constitutive of the modern Ecuadorian state from its historical roots (Foote 2006) to its contemporary manifestations, which have placed Ecuadorian's plurinational body as interconnected in highly uneven and unequal ways²⁴².

Analyzed from a critical race perspective, the argument for “equality” in this form sounded much like the arguments that are made across the hemisphere that work against social justice movements, including those arguments that suggest that affirmative action places whites at a “disadvantage” vis-à-vis people of color and minorities. These types of arguments ignore the historical and structural dimensions of racism.

In his most belligerent moments, Correa disregarded Plurinationalism as an empty discourse that did not resolve indigenous problems. President Correa framed the most pressing indigenous issues as a problem of poverty as opposed to one of political rights. On the 6th of May, President Correa travelled to an indigenous community in the parish of Colta, Chimborazo, where his Minister of Urban Development and Housing (MIDUVI) gave away more than 2,700 houses for indigenous families. Free housing for the most poor was a cornerstone of President Correa's populist-welfare programs. In his speech during the ceremony, he called indigenous leaders, like Marlon Santi—president of CONAIE— liars, who manipulate their bases, and who want to “divide water up among themselves.” After all, he invoked, “When have you have travelled to the US?

242 Analyzed from a critical race perspective, the argument for “equality” echo arguments against black, indigenous, and minority rights in general as a form of “reverse racism” in the US, Brazil, among other countries.

Never! Ask them [indigenous leaders] how many times they travel a year....” And declared, “No one has done more for indigenous people than this government.”

He continued:

“We declared the Ecuadorian State a Plurinational State: we recognized different nationalities. The Kichwa nationality of the highlands, the Kichwa nationality of the Amazon....dozens of nationalities that are in this country. But let’s not kid ourselves. What is the most urgent problem facing you? Roads, houses, education, healthcare...indigenous poverty is the principal problem...We are fighting this problem with houses, with roads, with better education, better healthcare...

Correa set up a discursive binary, pitting rural poverty against a broad set of political rights encompassed in a plurinational framework. By creating oppositions between class interests and rights-based struggles, he disregarded the ways in which material concerns were inter-connected with political, social, and resource rights that comprised a plurinational framework envisioned by the indigenous movement. Discursively representing indigenous leaders as a privileged few, Correa sought to create a wedge between impoverished indigenous communities and indigenous and rural coalitions formed in defense of life. To drive home the point, he continued:

“Do you know what the most important part of the Pachamama is? You. Human beings. Let’s respect Pachamama but we will necessarily affect her a little. Right? So that we can build houses, schools, roads. [...] There are indigenous leaders [that say] ‘no to oil, no to mining,’ Imagine that if in your little plot of land, or your chakrita there was a gold mine [sic] and we say ‘we are not going to take out gold that could get us out of poverty

so that we don't touch the Pachamama.... [but] we have to take gold out to get out of poverty."

Correa turned indigenous discourses about the *Pachamama* as a way to drive home the point that nature's rights were rights only afforded by a privileged few. In other words, poor peoples' interests were not tied to environmental or resources rights, but would be best served by gold extraction. The effect of this kind of discourse is to polarize and divide rural communities. The idea that mining alleviated rural poverty was repeated at all levels: from the World Bank to rural community members in Victoria del Portete and Tarqui who supported IAMGOLD's mining project. It the effect of placing material rights against resource rights.

Although my collaborators in the anti-mining struggle would often tell me that poverty was not the primary motivation factor behind local support for the mine; the fact remained that Benjamin's most urgent issue as the parish council president that he wanted to work on was "rural development"—a code for poverty. One day, he told me, "we have to have people making at least \$300 a day if we don't want them to support IAMGOLD." Even Rosita, who threw a clod of dirt at Correa because she hated him so much, signed up for the state's Alimentate Ecuador—a food subsidy program for the country's most needy. She didn't see this as a contradiction, remarking, "who doesn't want to eat for free?"

THE PLURINATIONAL PARLIAMENT

A controversial decision put an end to the impasse over the water law. On May 12th, 2010—the same day that the ANC plenary was to vote on the bill—Fernando

Cordero decided to take the Alianza País draft law to *pre-legislative consultation*. The Montecristi Constitution grants people the right to be consulted before a legal project affects them. Vote on the water law would be delayed five months to accommodate a consultation process, which initially appeared to favor indigenous, afro, and rural communities that comprised the bulk of the coalition. However, the coalition remained skeptical of Cordero's because the terms of the consultation would be decided by the state. Announcement for the decision was made during a second round of road blockades.

The blockades began on May 10th in anticipation of the final and definitive vote on the water law. Most of the road blockades were concentrated in the North and Central highlands, strongholds of the indigenous movement. On May 12th to support the uprising, campesinos and indígenas from Victoria del Portete, Tarqui, and the surrounding areas gathered near the Y de Tarqui, in front of the *Santa Teresita* communal house to install what was coined the "*Parlamento Plurinacional*." When I arrived, the situation was tense. A small group of women in *polleras*, led by Lourdes, waved blue flags with UNAGUA emblazoned on them to the cars that passed by shouting, "Long live the strike!" They chastised drivers, especially ones they knew. Lourdes and another woman waved their flags at a *25 de Agosto* threateningly as if they were going to hit the bus with it. As they inched their way to the middle of the street they managed to block it. A handful of police lined up in formation and others turned on the engine of the anti-riot tank, parked on the side of the road. After some tense scuffles between the two, protestors took the road. Police retreated to the grassy pasturelands that edged the Pan-American highway while others sat on top of the anti-riot tank and played card games.

Tensions between campesinos and the anti-riot police did not escalate into conflict because they reached an agreement that there would not be a full road closure. In other words, campesinos would keep an alternative route through Tarqui open and let cars pass through the Pan-American every so often.

Fathers Samuel, Walter, and Gerardo led a mass from the second story balcony of the communal house, blessing both water and food crops. Speeches from male leaders followed, including one from Benjamin Macias who reaffirmed, “we are indigenous.” Marcel was often amused when Benjamin, with such fair skin, considered himself indigenous. By this time there were about 600 people gathered, with busloads of people coming from Girón, San Fernando, Nabón, and Sigsig. Simultaneous to the gathering, 5,000 water users representing the communal drinking water system of Baños marched through the streets of Cuenca. I sat with Silvia and some other women in a hilly pasture across from the balcony. She critiqued the leadership in the anti-mining movement for being too centered around Carlos and too male-dominated.

During the rally, leaders received word that Fernando Cordero made a last minute decision to take the draft water bill to what was referred to as a ‘pre-legislative consultation.’ In his decision, he made reference to the Constitutional Court’s decision regarding the mining law. The Constitutional Court’s decision regarding the mining law was lukewarm. It determined that the ANC’s approval of the mining law violated article 57 (no. 17) of the constitution. The Montecristi constitution requires that indigenous people, afro-Ecuadorians, and communities be consulted prior to the passing of the laws that will affect their collective rights. But in the end, the constitutional court upheld the

mining law as constitutional. In the case of the water law, it appeared that Cordero wanted to avoid another Constitutional Court battle and was willing to carry out a pre-legislative consultation process.

Initially, Cordero's decision was celebrated as a victory. The speeches were temporarily interrupted by the sound of an accordion playing and people dancing in the street. But, not everybody was in a celebratory mood. A little while later, I stood with Don Julio in the middle of the road. We were both horrified by two men jabbing inexpertly at the small bull who tried to kill it for the feast that followed, but only managed to torture the poor animal. Don Eduardo had sold the bull to the water system, and folks grumbled at the price. Our commentary on the poor bull turned to the law. I could tell he was angry because he raised his voice and spit when he talked. He opined that the five month consultation process was intended to "dissolve and divide" the movement. He commented "now that we are all united, CONAIE, the university [students], everyone" the law should be voted on so that it be "approved, good or bad but approved [sic]."

Don Julio's focus on the intentions to divide the movement behind Cordero's decision echoed the suspicions that later developed. That day, Doris Soliz, Coordinator of Politics for the Correa administration made a controversial clarification. The state would take the draft law to consultation to the "base" or community level, but not their representative organizations. In other words, the three most representative indigenous and afro-Ecuadorian organizations: CONAIE, FENOCIN, and FEINE would be excluded

from the consultation process. This announcement came in the absence of legal regulations to put into practice the pre-legislative consultation.

Pachakutik leadership began to organize a proposal to define the legal procedures for the pre-legislative consultation process to include indigenous collective rights under ILO 169 and the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights.²⁴³ The decision transferred the street conflict back onto the legal terrain.

CONCLUSION

The uprisings against the water law lasted a total of 15 days. In an assembly held a few days after the decision, Marlon Santi declared that the Mobilizations for the Defense of Life and Water a success, saying, “without this action, they would have approved the Water law in the National Assembly. In spite of media campaign full of lies...gifts, projects, intense disinformation from the Correa government, we have won this battle.”²⁴⁴

Though people suspected that the pre-legislative consultation process would only serve to divide the movement, many celebrated what they saw as the defeat of Correa. However, the problem was that water law became so intimately tied to Correa that it became difficult for the movement to separate the two. Again, I turn to Santi’s words:

243 El Mercurio, “La consulta debe ser colectiva” interview with Jorge Guaman, Pachakutik National Coordinator. 5/17/2010.

244 CONAIE communication, “Con la frente en alto hemos ganado una batalla, pero la lucha continua...” distributed to email listserve 5/17/10.

“Correa elaborated the Water Law to favor the usual suspects and to benefit the businessmen, transnational [corporations], the creole oligarchy, defending the same corrupt system.”

Pacts made with the elite during the final moments of the water law debate crystallized the water law debate into binaries between national elites and the state versus national indigenous, afro-Ecuadorian, and campesino organizations. Even under a “post-neoliberal government,” the state’s protection of elite interests under resource conflicts are reminiscent of the kinds of alliances made by neoliberal governments. This points to the ways in which left or “post” neoliberal government’s focus on material redistribution may very well continue, if not deepen, a dependence on national elite investments. Moreover, national elites are also latching onto the post-neoliberal discourses and practices for their own survival, effectively reframing privatization as “service contracts” and private interests as part of a “plurinational” state politics.

The politics of material redistribution and a resource rights agenda came into tension during the water law debates. Correa’s racist belligerence, the appropriation of Plurinationalism, the criminalization of the movement for water rights, and the lack of consideration of the critical nodes, all point to the limits of the post-neoliberal moment. Post-neoliberal policies undermine the resource rights of campesino, indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorian communities.

Even so, elements of the draft law were promising much more so than the previous water law: the law would recognize indigenous collective rights to water systems, recognized water as Pachamama, and prohibit mining 2,500 meters from

páramos. Certainly, as the indigenous movement pointed out, the law didn't go far enough and would not redistribute water resources. However, the organization of the public debates in binary terms, as well as state racism and violence, closed off the possibilities for developing a new language of protest that could simultaneously recognize the progressive elements of the draft law *and* reject the state's use of racism and violence. This meant that the "win" that Santi pointed out was not the incorporation of the critical nodes to the law that the movement demanded, but of the defeat of the law altogether.

In the end, the state did not take the water law to a pre-legislative consultation. As of the writing of this dissertation, the 1970's water law that is the source of so much inequity over water distribution remains intact. From this vantage point, the "win" that Santi declared, seems much more ambiguous. The indigenous movement *did* effectively challenge the water law as well as the racism and repressive violence surrounding it. The charges for sabotage and terrorism for the five leaders were dropped. However, the country has ended up with a piece of legislation that has overwhelmingly benefited economic elites.

The "win" for the movement has come in a different form. As an effect of organizing around the water law, people in the anti-mining movement now identify politically as indigenous and there is a national movement for the defense of water and life. I returned to Ecuador in December 2010. I found most of my collaborators had identified themselves in the recent census as indigenous, regardless if they had known

indigenous cultural, class, or biological (blood) ancestry.²⁴⁵ One night during a celebratory dinner party with old friends in Cuenca including Silvia, her husband, and Marcel, I asked Silvia and Marcel why they had identified themselves as indigenous in the census. Marcel said he identified as indigenous in the census because, after all, “the Pachamama is mother to us all....we are all her sons and daughters.” Being “indigenous”—at least in the south—and at least in public sphere— is defined in relationship to the environment or to Pachamama.

245 An exception was Doña Berta and her family who continued to insist that they were mestizo because they had “lost” traditions and poverty that defined what it meant to be indigenous.

Conclusion: Memory, Indigeneity, and Environmental Subjectivities.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation has described the ways in which the anti-mining movement has disputed, engaged, and transformed post-neoliberal state mining and water policy, and in the process, has become a broad-based popular movement for the defense of life. In 2005, disputes over water contamination sparked a protest movement in the parishes of Victoria del Portete and Tarqui. Elite dairy farmers successfully mobilized scientific methods—introduced with ‘green’ neoliberal reforms—to challenge the legitimacy of IAMGOLD’s mine. Their success in casting doubt over the sustainability of IAMGOLD’s exploratory work resulted in the making of a local protest movement that included the participation of dairy farmers with indigenous ancestry but who identified as campesinos.

Each chapter in Part 1 of the dissertation examines a predicament or double-bind facing the movement. Dairy farmers were hopeful that the election of Rafael Correa to the presidency would resolve conflicts over mineral extraction, but he embarked on a set of legislative reforms to promote progressive extractivism—a state directed form of resource extraction to finance social welfare programs. Activists were faced with several dilemmas: Should they protest the state or engage in dialogue? What kind of language and political platform could create national unity among a growing coalition of rural and urban environmental activists in spite of the resurgence of mestizo racism within the movement and the different kinds of extractive projects being carried out across the

country? Through what methods could they contest an extremely popular president financing the much applauded social welfare programs while not being accused of aligning themselves with the right-wing, thereby losing legitimacy as a popular movement?

When the movement finally found a unified political voice to challenge Correa's proposed mineral law, the creation of new state subjectivities to support mining development limited the movement's success, ultimately leading to what appeared to be their demise.

A state proposed water law gave new energy to the movement and sparked a new set of mobilizations and alliances in response. Dairy farmer activism was routed through the community water boards who then created alliances with the regional and national indigenous movement as well as the Catholic Church. Subaltern mestizo dairy farmers, indigenous communities, and the Catholic Church all shared common perceptions of water as a source life, and used this as a mobilizing tool to rally for community water rights. Mediated through Catholic and Andean knowledge practices, the Quimsacocha páramo became Kimsakocha: a symbol of life, a spiritual entity, and the embodiment of the Pachamama. The movement's success was largely measured in changes to the language of the draft law that would limit mineral extraction near water sources and recognize water as the embodiment of the Pachamama with a particular set of rights

While industry lobbied the state to limit reforms to the law, deepened protests forced the National Assembly to ultimately take the law to a "pre-legislative" consultation. Even though the latter never materialized, the movement in defense of life celebrated the

decision to retract the law from being voted upon in the Assembly as a victory. They did not believe that the reforms written into the draft law would effectively guarantee community rights to access and manage water resources. While indigenous cosmovisiones and certain measures to safeguard water from contamination were written into the draft law, the movement did not believe it went far enough. The draft law did not specifically prohibit mining near water resources, it did require the audit of water concessions granted to industry, nor did it integrate popular organizations into key decision-making positions in the development and execution of national water policy.

I have tracked the dramatic political contests over resource extraction under a post-neoliberal administration. But, what has all of this political activism meant—if anything—for dairy farmers and their relation to the environment? I turn to the reflections of Don Félix, the former president of the San Pedro de las Escaleras community to illustrate one facet of the transformations taking place among dairy farmers.

“One used to just throw away the [candy] wrapper on floor—I used to do that. I recognize that it is bad, but now, one looks for a garbage can, or if not, you put it in your pocket,” remarked Don Félix. He laughs, “how they add up!” He continued:

“let me tell you compañerita, I am teaching my girls to throw everything in the garbage can—I have a garbage can at home—and I tell them, *mi’jas* you put that there, in the garbage can.’ We have to take care of the environment. One used to throw things away without thinking. At home, now we separate our garbage, lettuce cores...[and other

organic waste] goes in one place and the plastics go in another place. I burn the plastics and then bury the kitchen waste because it makes nice dirt.”

I ask him, “Does this all come from the struggle?” And he replied, “Of course it does! We have learned so much, we have learned so much in this struggle about taking care of the environment. Before we didn’t even know what a [mining] concession was.....it’s true that we used to contaminate water, we used to dump things in the river...but now we don’t.”

Don Félix points to the formation of an environmental subjectivity whereby farmers occupy new ways of inhabiting and relating to the environment resulting from their participation in the protest movement. Particularly during the water law mobilizations, I noticed a surge in peoples’ talk about the landscape as well as their practices to conserve and take care of it in new ways. These transformations, encouraged by the community water board leaders occurred alongside the ‘recuperation’ of Andean practices, or what water board leaders called ‘lo tradicional.’ In this concluding chapter, I trace the connections between the emergence of the ‘tradicional,’ the re-centering of an indigenous collective political identity, and the formation of an environmental consciousness. I turn to the World Water Day celebration of 2010 to illustrate.

RESCATANDO LO TRADICIONAL

In 2009, UNAGUA began an annual community celebration with the election of the Yacu Ñusta, meaning water princes in Quechua on World Water Day. The observation of World Water Day was proposed and passed by the United Nations in 1992. In this case, the water board leaders transformed World Water Day (a holiday with

potentially imperialistic undertones) into a community celebration to “recreate” Andean traditions. The celebration was a vehicle through which UNAGUA foregrounded Andean culture and encouraged practices to transform campesinos relations with the environment. Though the tradition began in 2009, the celebration in 2010, which occurred simultaneous to water law mobilizations, visibly re-centered an indigenous political identity and encouraged an environmental consciousness.

The celebration was held at the ‘Y de Tarqui,’ a patch of triangular grass where the Pan-American splits into two. If one follows the curve to the left, one continues onto the new Pan-American highway, and if one drives straight, the smooth asphalt becomes a bumpy drive through the barrios of Tarqui: Las Americas (where Carlos Perez’ family lives), Estación de Cumbe (where Doña Berta’s family lives), and then into San Pedro de las Escaleras, the center of Victoria del Portete, until finally the road connects back into the Pan-American Highway. The Y de Tarqui is a symbolic place. It is a site farmer resistance where anti-mining and water law street blockades were convened and it was also located in a neighborhood regarded as having indigenous ancestry.

The event began with a mass given by Father Samuel and Father Gerardo, the latter who was dressed in purple vestments that marked lent on the religious calendar. It was Sunday, March 21 (though World Water Day was the 22 of March), and only a week before Palm Sunday. The stage was set up with all of the nature-culture elements that symbolized Andean traditions. Carlos encouraged people to bring water in earthen clay pots for the blessing, “to bring back and valorize lo tradicional.” Sometimes he would use the word “lo nuestro” literally meaning “ours” as in “our traditions.” But hardly anyone

had the earthen clay pots anymore. Women brought the water from the Irquis River inside an assortment of plastic and aluminum containers readily available in their kitchens. Joining the water were other elements: a plate of roasted guinea pig set atop boiled potatoes; a large black fired clay pot in one corner; another earthen pot with words in Quechua written across it: Our Land Chicha (Ñucanchi Llacta Azua) and another clay pot with red and white flowers that read, International Water Day, which would be kept by the young woman elected as the Yacu Ñusta. A young willow tree jutted out from a black plastic bag from on stage as well.

People were also part of the scene. The candidates for the Yacu Ñusta competition stood on stage, and two of them held a hand written cardboard sign that read ‘Everyone United for the Defense of Water,’ with smiley faces inside two blue water drops on either side of the sign. A young boy dressed in a green robe and hood simulated a tree. Long green fringes hung from his green hood and a string of leaves were placed around his neck. He held an Ecuadorian flag in one hand, and a set of synthetic pink and white roses in the other. A set of two blue UNAGUA flags hung from either side of the stage and a banner from the Archdiocese of Cuenca hung from the front of the stage. The rectangle banner was a blown up picture of a young brown-skinned girl playing in the river. Written across the top were large letters: “I support community protection, defense, and management of water.” On the bottom left-hand side was Father Samuel’s slogan: ‘Free, living water is holy water.’ On the bottom right-hand side was the latest version of the AGUA campaign:

Agua Viva (Living water)

Agua Derecho (Right Water)

Agua Sagrada (Sacred Water)

Agua Libre (Free Water)

The priests blessed all of the different elements that made life possible in the Andes: food, water, and plants. The young women in the Yacu Ñusta competition brought the offerings to the makeshift altar which included flowers, a plate of roasted guinea pig, and a willow tree to symbolize the community's "commitment to reforest" the watershed and take care of water supplies. After the mass, the priests blessed eighty willow and capulí—Andean cherry—trees that were gathered near Father Samuel's pick-up truck.

The Yacu Ñusta competition began after the blessing of the elements. Although San Pedro de las Escaleras elected the Cholita during its annual festivities, the community had never elected a water princess. The use of Quechua in this new tradition was indicative of the transformations taking place that re-centered an Andean indigenous identity. The performance of "traditional" gender norms intersected with water politics too. Young women were dressed as "cholitas": a white straw hat, tall top and thin brim with a blue band; hair in two braids; white lace blouse embellished with sequence; a pollera skirt with intricate floral embroidery, studded with carefully selected sequence; a macana shawl; and low heels or flat open toed shoes. Though many of the women from Tarqui and San Pedro, including Doña Berta, Beatriz, and Rosita wore the pollera and white hat, the macana shawl was replaced with the chalina, a thick woolen wrap that could be used to shield the arms or legs from the cold. Although the pollera was seen as

part of the *traje típico* of the area, Doña Rosita used to sew the floral and sequence design for a manufacturer in Cuenca and said that it originated from Spain.

Each candidate represented a barrio, a water system, or a community organization. How well the women embodied the cholita through costume as well as their ability to answer questions related to the defense of water weighed heavily as to whether she was elected as the Yacu Ñusta. Each candidate had to select from a glass bowl that had different questions folded on pieces of paper. The questions included ones such as, “what does Kimsacocha mean to you? Why is it important to defend water? What is the relationship between women and water? One by one, the young women walked up to the center of the stage to have their turn at the microphone to answer the question. Most of their answers spoke about water as a source of life—a now dominant discourse in the movement.

The young woman who won made a memorable statement at the end of her intervention. She declared her commitment to defend water resources and ended by stating “And I don’t care if they call me an india (indian)!” Doña Sofía from San Pedro who stood next to me thought that it was fair that she won, “she was the best speaker,” she opined. I was jarred by her comment because she was fair-skinned. In the dominant form of racial politics that are played out vis-à-vis skin color in Cuenca, few would have mistaken her for “being an Indian.” The recuperation of the racist term ‘indian’ in a place that otherwise qualified itself under the racially-neutral term campesino, pointed to a reordering of the ways in which people made sense of themselves. Nilda’s outburst as india was a performative moment that relayed UNAGUA’s politics of recuperating

Andean identity and which came alongside the building of closer alliances with CONAIE and ECUARUNARI. But, this newfound term of indigeneity is not about blood or a tightly-bound culture, but about peoples' relationship to nature—it is an identity that is defined in relation to practices and politics of environmental defense, against an economic development model of extractive industries, and against the Correa administration who promotes mining activity.²⁴⁶

The event closed with a pampamesa where a long sheet was placed on the short grass and everyone ate together by sharing boiled fava beans and corn, potatoes, roasted guinea pig, and hard boiled eggs. The food—symbolic of Andean tradition— was washed down with homemade chicha, a fermented maize beer.

THE SAUCE (WILLOW TREE)

Carlos Perez declared the willow tree give-away a pure success. “Faltaban” he told me, as he flashed a bright white smile. Shortly after the World Water Day celebration, the community water boards had given out more than 1,000 young trees and it was still not enough to meet the high demand for them. People were left asking for more. The 1,000 plants included the eighty willow and cherry trees that had received the blessing by the Catholic priests during the community celebration. The willow-tree give away and the memories it inspired is an apt site to explore the ways in which collective indigenous political identities coincide with new ways of inhabiting and relating to the environment.

²⁴⁶ Recuperating the term *indio* as opposed to ‘indigenous’ also referenced the old usage of *indio*—of someone who was oppressed and poorly treated. This seemed to speak against Correa’s increasing domination—or attempts to dominate and disparage—campesino and indigenous peoples’ struggle.

The willow tree give-away was organized by Carlos Perez who was the president of the Victoria-Tarqui water system and the UNAGUA organization. As a leader with strong ties with the indigenous movement he mobilized indigenous discourses as a way of encouraging the adoption of an environmental consciousness. For instance, a few months before the willow tree give-away he declared, “we campesinos, we Indians, were the first environmentalists,” but then he pleaded with people to think about the relationships between forests and water. “For every tree we cut,” referencing the extension of pasture lands, “we lose a glass of water. We have to take care of our páramos. Water is H₂O. One part oxygen, two parts hydrogen. The oxygen emitted by the tree unites with the hydrogen to make water...we have to be more responsible.” Carlos combined narratives of indigenous people as being ‘closer’ to nature, with scientific explanations about the symbiotic relationship between water and trees to foster an environmental consciousness among campesino dairy farmers. The willow tree giveaway was an effort to change peoples’ practices, bringing them into alignment with the language of environmentalism that formed the discursive terrain on which mineral extraction was being debated (see Roseberry 1994). In other words, dairy farmers also had to be held accountable to the evaluations of sustainability that they deployed when challenging the legitimacy of mineral extraction.

The reforestation of the willow tree was a nexus where the hegemonic language of environmental sustainability intersected with activists search for reconstructing Andean community. The reforestation of the willow tree drew in two other local institutions but meant different things to different institutions and people involved in the

reforestation efforts. First, the progressive sects of the Catholic Church launched an environmental campaign for Palm Sunday. Several churches in the city encouraged people to bring fragrant plants such as rosemary for the blessing on Palm Sunday instead of the waxed palm tree that people usually brought to church in the form of a cross. The waxed palm tree was harvested from Ecuador's subtropical forests. Priests, such as Father Samuel who had established relations with a conservation organization, argued that the harvest of the palm severely endangered bird habitants and fragile ecosystems. As part of the environmental campaign, the Santo Domingo church group led by Marcel gave away willow trees procured through the University of Cuenca's agronomy program.

Second, the municipal water company ETAPA was engaged in its own environmental protection schemes, which also drew in the community water boards. Beginning in 2009, the Victoria-Tarqui water system engaged in negotiations and later agreements with the municipal water agency ETAPA to "co-manage" the community-water system. Under the agreements, ETAPA would provide technical and financial assistance to install new treatment tanks, tubes, as well as water meters. Water users were required to raise some of the money and provide labor for infrastructure improvements. As part of these agreements, the Victoria-Tarqui water system, along with the parish government of Victoria del Portete (presided by Benjamin Macias) and the parish government of Tarqui also signed an agreement to develop a Watershed Management Plan for the Irquis River, which included a reforestation project with native plant species. The reforestation of the willow tree as a community celebration was informally linked to the agreements made with the municipal water agency for the management of the Irquis

River watershed. Interestingly, the environmental management plan for the Irquis River—which was still to be executed at that time—was to be financed through the World Bank’s Climate Change Adaptation Program (PACC, in Spanish).²⁴⁷ In other words, community water board leaders such as Carlos Perez occupied spaces that could be characterized as sites of neoliberal environmental governance but hoped to redeploy them to protect water resources from ‘sustainable’ mineral extraction promoted by the same institutions.

MEMORIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL LOSS

For the people who were part of the movement, the reforestation of the willow and capulí formed a new way of inhabiting and relating to the landscape. The enthusiasm for sowing the willow trees among dairy farmers along with an increased in talk of environmental loss points to the formation of new environmental subjectivities. I call ‘narratives of environmental loss’ the often repeated stories about what the landscape used to be like, what people used to sow, and how and why that has changed. I was struck by the level of repetition in these stories during the water law mobilizations, and argue that the nostalgia within the narrative of the past, in addition to the sowing of new trees, points to a new way of relating the environment that has resulted from engagement in

²⁴⁷ The reforestation project was some source of disagreement between Carlos and the program managers from the water company. For instance, one of the project managers complained to me, “Carlos wants to get—let’s say—300 plants to reforest, but we want to *programar* something...how much will we do a year and where...this isn’t just about giving plants away.” He said that campesinos were responding well to the program when the plants were given away but that more direction was needed—that those plants needed to be planted in places where they were needed. He wanted to “institutionalize” (his words) the “management and follow up” of the reforestation project.

anti-mining politics. My conversation with Oscar from Tarqui is indicative of these transformations.

The day after Palm Sunday, Oscar from Tarqui stopped by my apartment to return the camera that I had loaned him a few days earlier. We chatted over tea and bread. I offered to give him my willow tree that I had picked up through the Church. He was ecstatic and happily accepted the young willow. Oscar, who had been a part of the Coordinadora had tense relations with both Luis Morocho (his cousin) and Carlos Pérez. Even so, he had received three plants from the community water-board. He was excited to have a fourth and thought about where he would plant them around his small property.

The willow tree became the entry point for remembering what the land in Tarqui used to be like. Tarqui, he described, “was like a forest of willows.” The entire valley floor, which was now all pasture land, was filled with willow trees whose leaves would serve as forage for dairy cows. “And people didn’t have wire fences” he added. The willow trees served as a way to demarcate property lines. He tracks the loss of the willow to the changes in the course of the river. Once ‘they’—though he didn’t specify who—changed the course of the river the entire valley dried up and stopped flooding. The willow trees needed plenty of water and with the change in the landscape, the willow trees died.

Rosita had also told me about the willow tree’s prevalence in the area and remembered it fondly. She told me that the willow tree died out because of official efforts to build an airport. She said that they had put some powdered yellow stuff on the

land that made the willow trees die, but the airport was never built because local residents refused to allow project sponsors to move the river to the “other side” she said, by passing everyone’s land. I asked Oscar about her theory, and he said that it is possible, because it seemed that the trees just “got sick and died.”

I offered Oscar a bowl of capulís and uvillas (gooseberries) that I had bought from the agro-ecology market on Saturday. My own shopping and food habits were also influenced by the anti-mining movement. Silvia, an anti-mining activist involved in the Asamblea de los Pueblos coalition belonged to the regional agro-ecology movement. She and her husband, who worked with a Spanish NGO, were active in promoting agro-ecology as source of income and an alternative form of development to mining extraction. Their work was primarily centered in Santa Isabel to the south and Cañar to the north east and also formed a part of efforts to *rescatar lo tradicional*. They made an effort to have farmers grow native and endangered fruits, vegetables, and grains. The Andean cherry and gooseberry were widely recognized as native plants that could become extinct in the area. Oscar popped the sweet and tart fruits into his mouth. Our conversation slowly shifted to food production in Tarqui.

“There’s a complete loss of the sowing of traditional food that people used to grow,” he said. For instance, he said that his father used to grow five different types of corn. He began to number them off with his fingers, “red, black, yellow, and two types of whites. The first [white corn] was pointy, used for toasting, and the second was [the white corn] of jima as they call it.” The conversation echoed the one that I had with another woman months earlier who also told me about all of the food crops her family used to

grow but abandoned for dairy farming. Oscar said that his father used to sow oatmeal, wheat, and many other grains, but there has “been a lost in variety.” When I asked him why, he paused for a minute, sipping on the cup of lemongrass tea. Then he said, something to the effect of, ‘it’s now a new generation of people, and developmentalism came and so people wanted to be modern.’ In part he said, that “parent’s never inculcated agricultural work in their kids...none of my siblings are agriculturalist,” and mentioned that his father no long “sows” and now only has dairy cows. He recalled that his father used to have large silos made of straw mats strung together to store all the grains that he would grow. The grains, Oscar said, “lasted all year.”

I pressed the point, “But why doesn’t he grow grains anymore?” Oscar replied, “He doesn’t have any help. Before the eight of us (children) used to help them,” and then he mentioned how changes in agriculture also changed peoples’ diet. He recalled for instance, “when I was a kid we never ate [white] rice,” and now white rice is a staple in the campesino diet. “Only on a Sunday or a Saturday would we eat rice...our diet was only based on products from the area,” he said. Whether for dramatic effect or not, he added “for lunch we would eat two bowls of soup, and for dinner another bowl of soup. Only soups!” He let out a half-laugh. Oscar listed all of the different things the soups were made of: beans, cauliflower, grains, and vegetables all grown by his parents. He said that every once in a while they would cook yucca root too and that all the bread and cheese was homemade or *casero*.

Oscar was among the first of my collaborators to openly embrace and celebrate his indigenous roots. On more than one occasion he denounced people from Victoria del

Portete as having a racist attitude towards people from Tarqui because they believed they were “white” and Tarqueños were “indian.” As part of his pride in being indigenous, he housed a collection of old woolen ponchos that marked a masculine indigenous identity, but which hardly anyone wore anymore. Some of the ponchos belonged to his father and grandfather. He also had a collection of old Andean musical instruments and antique tools from past agricultural days. They were all displayed like pieces in a museum in his living room. Moreover, he only used the traditional black fired dishware made of natural materials to eat and drink. At the time, Oscar was unemployed and trying to raise his little girl and a teenage son by himself. His dream was to get his community tourism project off the ground. He wanted to turn his home in Tarqui into a guest house for tourists. He was also hoping to open a restaurant in his home—linked to the community tourism project—for April 12th, the fiestas of Cuenca, when tourists came through town. In fact, he already founded the Centro Cultural Kawsay Yachay to promote these efforts. The name meant something to the effect of ‘life wisdom’ or perhaps best translated as ‘knowledge about the interconnection or webs of life.’

The movement to *rescatar lo tradicional* intersects with personal dreams as well as memories of environmental loss. Even though Oscar lamented the loss of ‘traditional’ ways of agrarian life, he would never think of turning to agricultural work as a part of reconnecting with that past relationship to the land. Instead, he would find new ways of creating those connection by sowing four willow trees on his property and telling gringas (and gringos) of what land and life used to be like in Tarqui.

When these memories of environmental loss were invoked in collective settings they were particularly powerful. For instance, at an UNAGUA meeting in late 2009, Carlos spoke to people about the importance of the ecological flow of the river—the amount of water needed in a river so that it can satisfy human needs and sustain healthy ecosystems. Carlos said, “rivers never used to dry up....do people remember that huge frog that used to live in the rivers but now has disappeared?” Carlos reminded people about how during the mingas [community work days] people used to play with each other by putting them on someone’s back when they were bent over. People began turned to each other, sharing laughter at the memory. Carlos, said once again, “now it has disappeared, we need to make the ecological flow of water something sacred.” By invoking memories of environmental loss—in this case, the loss of the frog, Pérez emphasized the importance of taking care of water sources. He did this by drawing on spiritual idioms of making water “sacred.” By invoking memory of the disappeared frog, Carlos crafted—even if momentarily—a community around that memory, and impelled people to care for the environment, which they began to do as Oscar and Don Félix demonstrate.

The cultural politics of “recuperating” lo tradicional was less about reconstructing the past and more about using social memory to move forward into the future with a new way of relating to place and the environment.

MOVING FORWARD

Everyone agreed that community water sources should be protected, but there was a significant amount of disagreement on how to move forward. Aside from the reforestation of the willow tree, competing efforts were made to protect the community watershed. Carlos, as the representative of the Victoria-Tarqui water system continued to deepen his engagement and negotiation with the municipal water agency on the “co-management” of the community water system in 2010. Carlos was a political strategist who believed that if he could get ETAPA to invest money into the management of the Irquis watershed, then when the time came to extract gold, the company would be forced to be accountable to its own discourses of environmental conservation and would have to side with the community to stop mineral extraction. The company already wanted to ban motorized sports, the extension of the grazing frontier, and the burning of the páramo to bring rain (common among some campesinos). For Carlos, it was only logical that mining would be the next step.

This was a contentious strategy among water users such as Doña Berta and her family. Earlier in 2009, Mari refused to pay a \$30 obligatory fee required for the new water system. She questioned the agreement more than once: “why pay it when ETAPA is with the *mineros* [IAMGOLD]?” She’d only pay the \$30 contribution when ETAPA made its opposition to mining public. Although ETAPA did engage in water protection and conservation projects, the institution was very careful in not staking out a position in relationship to mining development. In an interview with the water company, one staff

member told me that if the Quimsacocha gold mine project did move forward, the institution would serve as a third party environmental monitoring body.

Simultaneous to these efforts, Carlos Perez and ETAPA staff made separate efforts to get the Kimsacocha páramo recognized as a Ramsar site by the international community. This meant that they wanted the Kimsacocha páramo to be added to a list of internationally important wetlands to be conserved under the Ramsar Convention of 1975. This would require the financing of technical studies to develop maps and an ecological characteristic description of the wetlands as well as their geographic boundaries. Carlos petitioned, with little success, the Ministry of Environment who said that the agency simply did not have the funding to carry out the scientific studies and redirected Carlos to ETAPA. ETAPA staff was also looking into this as a way of conserving the area that stood outside of the 3,220 hectares. ETAPA staff embarked on the arduous task of identifying all of the legal landowners of the 3,220 hectares [which was not entirely owned by IAMGOLD] to solicit the funds from the government to buy out the landowners and put into practice the conservation scheme announced in 2007.

For his part, Benjamin Macias tried to use his position as the parish council president to declare Kimsacocha a national park. The designation of a ‘national park’ would protect the wetlands from mineral extraction under the current legislation. Benjamin had a seat on the County of Cuenca’s Environmental Management Council (CGA, by its Spanish acronym). He represented all of the rural parish council’s in the county of Cuenca in the CGA. The proposal essentially involved an extension of the limits of the El Cajas National Park southward to include Kimsacocha. The proposal

would have to be voted on by the five member council. Benjamin thought he could convince Franklin Buchelli, the director of CGA, but wasn't sure about the others especially the one appointed to represent commercial interests. Benjamín spent several months in 2010 lobbying for the CGA to pass the proposal. Although his proposal differed from that of the water boards, both he and Carlos then sought to use institutional means to conserve the páramo and stop IAMGOLD's project.

Not everyone agreed with the direction that Carlos and Benjamin were taking in their efforts to stop mining development in Kimsacocha. One day, Doña Berta made a direct challenge. She had a broken ankle and sat in one chair with her leg up on another chair. My eye caught a nest of wool sitting on top of a table. She had been spinning wool into yarn, a practice she had told me that she no longer did (and that's why she wasn't Indian). She told me: "The engineer [referring to Benjamin] says that we have to make Kimsacocha a national park, but we aren't in agreement," she says referring to her family. "It should be comuni..." she stutters as she searches for the right ending, "of the community. It should be free as it was. If they make it like Cajas, they will charge, and we don't want that, we want it to be free."

She did not just refer to an entrance fee, but about what it would mean symbolically. Even though the declaration of Kimsacocha as a national park would keep the area legally off-limits to mining, it would also imply that the wetlands would be regulated and managed by a regional institution that her family did not trust. While there were individual landowners—some of them her neighbors—the community of dairy farmers perceived Kimsacocha to be part of their territory because it contained their

water sources. These claims to territory increased with the various trips to Kimsacocha organized by the water board. The community of water user and activists had even baptized a new virgin in the name of Kimsacocha called the Virgin of the Waters of Kimsacocha and placed a statue of the virgin in the páramo. To have Kimsacocha managed and regulated as a publically-run national park seemed counter-intuitive to Doña Berta who regarding the páramo as belonging to the community.

Rosita was also critical of Carlos' political strategies. She complained most directly about the impending installation of the water meters that were part of the agreements between the Victoria-Tarqui water board and ETAPA. She agreed that some people took more than their fair share of water, but—echoing the words of Berta—she believed that water should “run free” like it always has. She disagreed with the increased rationalization of water, and believed that “water is born from mother earth...the Pachamama is water,” and hence should be “free.” The regulation of water would somehow transform the nature of water from a “free” living, entity into a rational commodity, which had a different set of qualities.

Both women's insistence that the watershed continue to be run by the community water systems was likely rooted in a historical distrust of ETAPA. A decade or so before, ETAPA made efforts to take over community water supplies through a modified privatization scheme proposed through a neoliberal water law. Even if unsuccessful, ETAPA commonly regarded community water systems as backward institutions that

were poorly managed.²⁴⁸ People feared that the “co-management” schemes would be used by ETAPA to completely take over the community watershed, thereby compromising community sovereignty over water—and by extension life.

ANDEAN EARTH-BEINGS

Even with disagreements over the specific mechanisms and alliances that should or shouldn't be made to protect Kimsacocha from mineral extraction, there was common agreement that Kimsacocha was more than just a watershed. Although I have previously discussed the emergence of Kimsacocha as a spiritual entity, I want to return to the question of ontology. The debates over community, state, and local institutional claims to water resources sparked a new set of memories of water as a sentient being.

One day I asked Beatriz, Doña Berta's daughter, if she had been to Kimsacocha as a child. She responded:

“Never had I gone to Kimsacocha. Just recently with this mining stuff. Didn't you know? She was mean, she was enchanted. No way could one go, because she was so mean [bravísima] ... When I was a girl, about thirty years ago, it came it out that some guys on motorcycles went up there and never came back.”

She theorized that they were swallowed by a demon. I had never heard this story and encouraged her to tell me more. “Did you ever go to Guillenzhapa?” She asked me.

²⁴⁸ Negative perceptions of community water boards were recounted to me in various interviews with ETAPA staff.

It was a community in Tarqui that I didn't know well. But after some explaining, I understood that Guillenzhapa was a community on the alternative route from Cuenca to Tarqui.

"Did you ever notice a lake?" She asked. I hadn't. "well a man from Guillenzhapa says that before the lake was enchanted. One day a woman came upon a witch, a huaca, and said, 'I am going' and pointed towards the three lakes [Kimsacocha]. She went taking everything, saying, 'The people here don't like me' and she went to the three lakes," Beatriz said.

A huaca, sometimes spelled guaca, is an Andean spirit that guards treasures. In this narrative, the guaca was linked to both water and gold. Beatriz continued: But now she [Kimsacocha] is not bewitched, we can touch the water and nothing happens. The gringos must've done something fifty years ago when they came. I don't know what, but they must've done something.

The gringos she referred to may have been a mission from the UN to explore mineral deposits in Kimsacocha or engineers from the Newmont mining company who were the first to hold a mining concession in the area. Her story of water as a spirit entity reminded me of something Luis Morocho had once mentioned. He recalled how his grandmother used to draw water from the river by asking for it. He said that if one didn't ask for permission, "the water would get mad and hide." Both stories, point to ways in which Kimsacocha is more than just a watershed, but what de la Cadena calls an "earth-being" that has come to occupy an important place in mining debates (de la Cadena 2010).

De la Cadena has written about the place of sentient beings in mining politics in Peru. de la Cadena suggests that the mountain spirit Ausangate was “always” there but only inserted itself into mining politics for a short time and then retreated back to being an earth-being that only mattered to the locals.²⁴⁹ These earth-beings are not political inventions, but signal a moment of rupture where dominant forms of knowledge are temporarily suspended and other ways of knowing and relating to the environment emerge. This leads me to conclude that the ‘new’ ways of inhabiting and relating the landscape lay at the intersections of multiple and competing knowledges that include global environmental discourses generated from institutions such as the World Bank and conservationists linked to the Catholic Church, but also include subaltern ways of knowing and relating to the environment.

Some have argued that indigenous and black communities have distinct ways of knowing (e.g. Escobar 2008). One could read this form of analysis as an essentializing one, whereby cultural differences are fixed and so innate that they become near biological. This is far from my argument. Subaltern ways of “knowing” water may be tied to a shared history of living in a particular place, but it is materialized only in the present through a particular political conjuncture. That is to say, these memories around water may have “always” been there, but they only surface and gain importance through present political struggles over water resources. To put it more clearly, I understand the emergence of water as a sentient being as a consequence of the re-centering of Andean

²⁴⁹ Personal Communication, 9/12/2011.

discourses in the particular political and historical moment that is emerging in the country and in the region.

SUMAK KAWSAY AND THE FUTURE OF THE MOVEMENT

After I left Ecuador, the dairy farmers deepened their ties with CONAIE and ECUARUNARI. The water boards hosted and participated in various political events to analyze the consequences of extractive industries. They have also participated in national mobilizations against the signing of contracts between the state and a Chinese mining company to exploit copper in the southern lowlands. In forums such as the 2011, Encuentro Continental de los Pueblos del Abya Yala por el Agua y la Pachamama, indigenous cosmovisiones performed through ceremonies to venerate the Pachamama punctuated the discussions for the building of a movement for “Sumak Kawsay.” What Sumak Kawsay (Living Well) means is still under construction. It’s an open ended approach to development that is generally interpreted as living in harmony with the earth’s resources. But, at the 2011 event hosted by the water boards and CONAIE, the nationally recognized indigenous leader Blanca Chancoso said that she feared that the term Sumak Kawsay would be folklorized and called for a deepened understanding of the term. She described Sumak Kawsay as a continuously evolving feeling or way of being that exceeds politics. She notes, “one has to feel it...it should not be frozen into a program to be available to the market of electoral or party politics.” Instead, she

continued, “Sumak Kawsay is our utopia, to build a shared life within a culture of community, and to resume our dreams that were left truncated in our history.”²⁵⁰

For dairy farmers, Sumak Kawsay is not a term that they used when I was doing my fieldwork. Yet, they did know that they wanted a future where they could live from agriculture, relying on clean water resources and tending to healthy farm animals. None of the women that I spoke with ever wanted to move to the city or dreamed of an urban “modern” life, “what for?” one said, “one would get bored.” They saw their future tied to the land. One woman, who had been empowered through the Defensoras of the Pachamama women’s group had the dream of starting a women’s farming cooperative and by the end of 2010 had materialized this vision. She and a group of women started a potato growing project with seed money from the parish government. Even the young children that were growing up with the anti-mining movement were encouraged to continue to live from the land. Beatriz, for instance, gave her young teenage son his own dairy cow. She wanted him to use his education to become an Ingeniero like Benjamin and continue to live an agrarian life.

It can’t be ignored that the 2008 Ecuadorian constitution recognizes subaltern ways of knowing and understanding the environment. It grants nature a set of political rights and recognizes Sumak Kawsay as a guiding principle for national development. Could the emergence of new ways of inhabiting, relating to, and knowing the landscape via indigenous discourses and subaltern epistemology be a form of statecraft? Mestizo allies and indigenous leaders, now firmly within the water rights movement, helped

²⁵⁰ Quoted in Raúl Zibechi, “Encuentro por el Agua y la Pachamama,” 5/7/2011

author the constitutional articles. These articles were not simply adopted by Correa—but were part of coalitions that connected (even if temporarily) social movements with state institutions. Now, these concepts—with the help of the very same allies and leaders in the National Constituent Assembly—are being mobilized to generate a broad-based national movement against the plans for progressive extractivism that has come to define Correa’s political program. For all of its repressive characteristics the Correa state has played a role in this. The constitution of 2008 provided a crucial opening for these movements by creating the discursive and epistemic terrain through which struggles over mining have transformed into struggles over ‘life.’

CONCLUSION

My dissertation identifies three key interventions, each that get at the heart of the contradictory nature of the political processes unfolding in the country.

First, Correa’s administration has delivered an unprecedented set of economic and social reforms that have benefited the country’s poorest sectors. The first set of reforms included the taxation of the rich and the renegotiation of operating contracts with petroleum companies. The state poured money into a host of social welfare programs, including housing for the poor, an increased welfare stipend, free education and healthcare, the building of new roads, and the expansion of the free food program.

Yet popular movements have found that their political rights are shrinking. Through ethnographic methods, chapters 3 and 4, I show the alacrity with which the Correa administration has mobilized state violence to push through mining-related reforms. I document how the government undertook an aggressive media campaign that linked the

funding of popular social welfare programs to the future of mineral extraction. The media campaign helped create new subjectivities amenable to mining, generating the social conditions for the state to wield violence against farmer activists opposed to new mineral legislation. My first intervention, then, argues that post neoliberal governance criminalized the protest movement with public insults to activists and the dissemination of rumors against anti-mining leadership by state officials.

My second intervention teases out the contradictions within social movement activism. The expansion of mineral extraction on mestizo, indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorian lands has opened the opportunity for the creation of a new, coalitional politics. A multi-ethnic and cross-class alliance formed—a shift away from identity-based organizing in the country. Ironically, even without identity-based demands, the movement I discuss here re-centered indigenous identity, not as a shared history of oppression or a set of cultural markers, but as a novel way of relating to the environment. Through the process of organizing against mining, subaltern mestizo farmers have embraced an indigenous identity as they have adopted new environmental conservation practices to safeguard the environment and water supplies.

Yet this study shows that the adoption and creation of new meanings of indigeneity occurred alongside the recreation of racial and gender hierarchies within the coalition movement. Movement leadership continued to exclude campesina women, already historically marginalized from community water politics; while white mestizo farmers that have continued to occupy a privileged place in community anti-mining organizing. Moreover, indigenous activists often speak in the name of afro-Ecuadorian

farmers, yet my research has found no afro-Ecuadorian farmers in visible roles in the movement leadership.

Lastly, my research interrogates the politics of the rights of “nature.” During the course of my research, social memory and Andean and Catholic spiritual practices brought the Quimsacocha watershed to life as a sentient being. This ontological shift played a central role in alternatives to mineral extraction. Dairy farmers, and the broader movement in defense of life to which they belong, challenged mineral extraction by demanding that the state undertake a new development approach that emphasized Sumak Kawsay. In doing so, they presented a new approach to development that balances human material needs with nature’s entitlements.

Analysts have celebrated the move towards the recognition of nature’s ontology as a decolonial measure that expands western political fields to include nature as a political agent. Yet the recognition of nature’s ontology as a source of new political futures is complicated by the fact that the state has also found such logic compelling. President Correa’s political party, which held a majority in the National Assembly, quickly approved the granting of nature’s rights in the new constitution in 2008, at the same time that it opposed binding consultation rights for rural communities. As of now, it appears that the recognition of nature’s ontology, despite its evocation of a utopic Andean future, could very well be a part of post-neoliberal state formation.

EPILOGUE:

In a surprising turn of events, IAMGOLD has struck a deal to sell the Quimsacocha project to INV metals—a junior Canadian company. The water board

system has declared IAMGOLD's retreat as a hard fought won community victory. The celebration is a cautious one though. IAMGOLD sold the Quimsacocha project to INV Metals in exchange for 40-45% of shares within the company. On the one hand, IAMGOLD appears to be distancing itself from the potential risks involved in the project. Negotiations with the state over exploitation contracts have left some multinationals dissatisfied with the financial terms of these contracts. A nationalist state combined with growing social opposition to the mining project casts doubts over IAMGOLD's ability to carry out and profit from the proposed gold mine. But, on the other hand, holding a large share of INV stocks, IAMGOLD ensures that it will profit from the Quimsacocha project if it does go through.

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